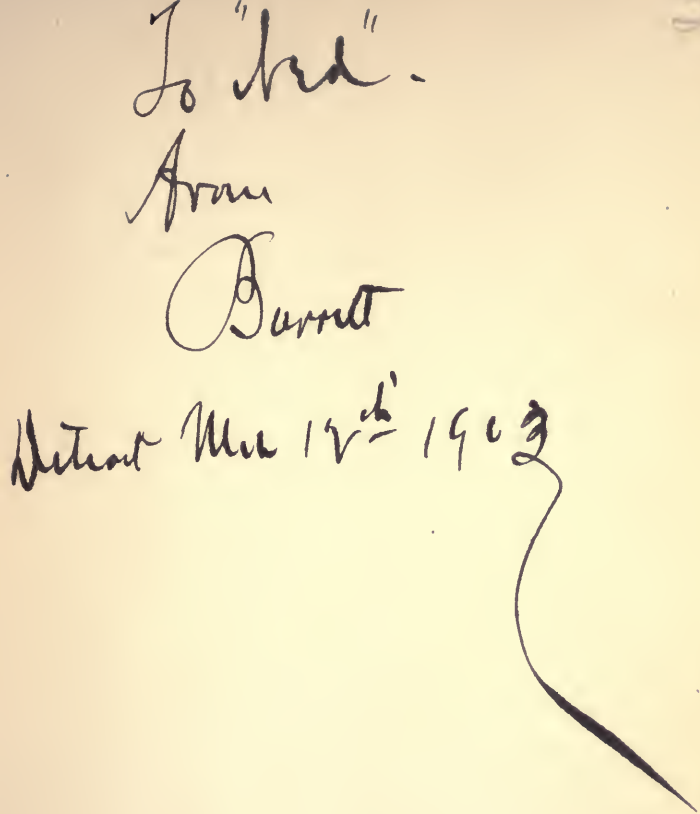
THE CAPTAIN

CHURCHILL WILLIAMS·


To "Ted".
From
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THE CAPTAIN

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"Their men do the fighting, but the women have their part"

See page 306

THE CAPTAIN

By
CHURCHILL WILLIAMS
AUTHOR OF
"J. DEVLIN—BOSS"

ILLUSTRATED BY
ARTHUR I. KELLER

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ENTERED AT
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Published January, 1903

TO MY FATHER
AND MOTHER

2133815

TO THE READER

WHEN they loosened the Captain's collar, half-hidden by the grizzled beard, they found a narrow ribbon, and fastened to this a lock of woman's hair. Twined about it was a baby's curl. For more than thirty years, in the long months when a continent lay between him and the woman he loved and the child he had never seen, in the days when with his axe he shaped a home for them among the oaks beside the great river, in the five dire years when he was doing his best for his country, at first unknown, always silently and without show, again when his countrymen twice laid their fortunes in his hands and paid to him the honours which his old mother had always said her boy would win — during all this time these rested above his heart. And so afterward to the end.

With a part of that time, with days of sunshine and hard work in the fields and woods, with days which were less bright but in each of which he did his duty as he saw it then, this story deals. I have tried to show the Captain as he was, simple, unflinching, patient. I have chosen to call him by the name

by which his neighbours called him when he first came among them in the little settlement on the Gravois. He had earned the name by courage and loyalty. No name ever fitted a man better. If my story helps to make this plainer and you come closer to him, thank the many faithful workers who have written of him from a knowledge broader and more intimate than I can claim. Most of all let me pay my tribute to him who has told his own story as few have the grace and skill to tell of great things — the Captain himself. The Captain whose whole life is poured out in his simple words, — "LET US HAVE PEACE!"

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	On the Gravois Road	11
II.	Mr. Mayhew and Some Others	27
III.	Way of a Maid	46
IV.	Colonel Marshall Prophesies	69
V.	A Square Peg in a Round Hole	86
VI.	About a Story-Teller	101
VII.	Crossing a Bridge	120
VIII.	The Girl from the South	136
IX.	One New Year's Night	155
X.	The Spark	170
XI.	Calling of the Drums	189
XII.	Flouting a Uniform	199
XIII.	A Baptism	211
XIV.	Beatrix	223
XV.	Thicker than Water	248
XVI.	Donelson	264
XVII.	What a Lame Man Did	277
XVIII.	Old Faces in Strange Places	286
XIX.	Under the Apple-Trees	294
XX.	The Wedge	308
XXI.	From the Front	324
XXII.	At Holly Springs	338
XXIII.	Mr. Lincoln's Key	359
XXIV.	By Way of the River	381
XXV.	"Come and Take Me"	392
XXVI.	Lee	415
XXVII.	The Captain's Way	431

ILLUSTRATIONS

"Their men do the fighting, but the women have their part" . . . . . Frontispiece

The Captain . . . . . *page* 16

"Kitty, that was the last we saw of him" *page* 152

"I will not!" she cried, and threw back her head . . . . . *page* 436

THE CAPTAIN

I

On the Gravois Road

THE axe flashed in the autumn sunlight and bit deeply into the log. The axeman measured each blow, his feet well apart, his body rocking on the hips. He was of middle height, broad and sinewy. His shirt was open at the neck, his overalls tucked into rusty high boots. His slouch-hat lay on the ground, and to his heavy brown hair and short beard clung many chips. Presently he straightened himself, drew a hand across his forehead, and looked up. It was a grave face, square and strong, two tiny furrows where the generous nose sprang from the broad brow, the lips well set, the chin firm. The gray eyes, a little weary at the corners, were honest and fearless in their gaze. They brightened as they swept the columns of oak and spruce, and the dark clumps of underbrush whose spice filled the nostrils.

Overhead, a patch of blue roofed the clearing; on three sides arched the green of the woods, on

the other, through a thin screen of bushes between the scattered trees, the yellow clay of a road showed here and there. The sounds of the woods filled the axeman's ears, — the tinkle of a near-by spring, the call of a thrush, the thousand murmuring tongues of leaf and twig and breeze. But weaving itself through these, distinct and sweet to his ears, came the broken words of a child, and his eyes drew to a mossy knoll fifty feet away on the clearing's edge. Two children there, in the shelter of a fallen tree, were building a bark house. The baby watched the work with intent gaze; the other, a boy, builded with great care, and told of his plan with every fresh bit of bark he laid in place.

The axeman watched in silence until the builder looked up and saw him. Then he laughed. "It's going up faster than mine."

"Yes, and it'll be big — bigger than yours — when it's done," the boy called back. He scrambled to his feet. "I'm coming to see yours." He came over, his knees powdered with mold, and the axeman dropped his blade, and swung him astride of the log. "Will you like it? Will you like your new home?" he asked. "It's all ours. Will it be better than the other homes?"

"Yes. Of course it will. This one's in the woods." The boy looked about him with critical approval. "It's awful big, isn't it? Show me how big it is."

The axeman pointed out the green stakes which marked a rectangle on the level of the clearing. "There," he said. "There and here." He turned to the piles of trimmed logs with their white hewn butts. "And there," he added. "Floors, walls, and posts." His face kindled. The memories of six hard years were lost in the perspective of as many months just past. They had been months of joyous, hopeful toil, months in which his hands roughened but his heart grew glad. He curved an arm around the boy. "Yes, this is our home," he said in deeper voice. "Home for us all."

The boy's eyes wandered from the stakes. He twisted suddenly about. "And you'll stay here with mamma and me? Where's *my* room?" he asked, suddenly.

"You want to know that again? Well, here." The axeman stepped to one end of the staked out space. "Here it is, and as high as that." He held a hand above his head.

"But the windows?"

A forefinger drew in the air the outlines of a window-frame, and was dropping when the boy reminded, "You haven't done the door."

"Oh, yes, the door! It will be here. Big and wide. Like this." Once more the finger sketched a frame in the space. Then the boy was satisfied. "That's all right," he said, "I like this house. When'll we come here?"

"Soon. As soon as I can finish. Mother will be glad, won't she?"

"Mamma? Yes, she will. She said —" Suddenly the boy saw that the other builder had upset the top story of the bark house. He cried out to him to stop, squirmed from the encircling arm, slipped from the log, and ran to the scene of destruction.

The axeman leaned on his axe for a minute, and stared at the ground. "It's a fresh start, sure enough," he said, half aloud. "This time is for good and all." His fingers closed on the hickory haft so that the knuckles grew white.

A squirrel tumbled down an overhanging limb, and scolded. The axeman snapped a finger at him. "Sho, you rascal!" he cried. Then he squared his shoulders, and the axe went aloft. The "chug" of the smitten wood sent the squirrel chattering aloft. For half an hour the chips spouted from beneath the blade, with occasional pauses as the builders of the two houses called to each other.

Then from the woods came a faint halloa. The axeman answered. "It's David," he said aloud, and rested. A minute later a figure broke through the underbrush, and halted. "Halloa, Captain. She's coming on."

"Yes, I've made a fairly big hole in the woods." David Ford came over and seated himself on a pile of logs. He took off his hat and fanned himself. He was sturdy in the legs and long in the

arms. He walked firmly and a little slowly. His head set strongly on wide shoulders and with thick brown hair, matched well his vigorous features and wide-open blue eyes.

"I reckon you'll be ready to have the raising before long," he said.

"Yes, if the weather holds, I ought to be ready in two weeks."

"Now, that's good. Captain, this'll be your own house, if there ever was one. You've done everything from hauling the stones to splitting shingles."

The Captain's eyes lightened. "I've done about all. Except some of the hauling."

"Well, you won't want for help at the raising. I'm coming, though that won't be much account, and I reckon uncle will send over a man or two. Yes, there's 'Lias Tobe. Doctor Shirley told me he was going to send him. And 'Lias's about the best man with an axe hereabouts — unless it's you."

"I don't claim to beat 'Lias," answered the Captain, smiling. "But it was Lee suggested to the doctor to send him, wasn't it?"

"I don't know, though I shouldn't wonder. Lee's mighty interested in your house building. If she's got it in her mind to have 'Lias come, he'll be on hand."

"She generally has her way," the Captain remarked, quizzically. "Have you been up there?"

"This afternoon. I just came from there. I

didn't reckon to come here at all to-day; but she was out riding, and I thought I might as well come around. You were up at St. Louis yesterday, weren't you?"

"Yes, I took a load of wood. There's a good bit of talk about Mr. Johnson's freeing his slaves. It's queer you don't hear more about it here."

"Oh, there's lots said here, too. You don't go round much, that's all."

"I've been too busy," said the Captain. "When the roof's on I'll take a day or two off, and try to make some friends."

"That won't be hard for you. You ought to do it. What are they saying about Mr. Johnson?"

"Oh, not so much when you sift it out," the Captain said, slowly. "It's the same things they've said a good many times, I guess, only I haven't been here. But it's a pretty tough nut to crack, and it won't be cracked with talking."

"You mean Kansas?"

"Kansas is only one little bit of it. It's the whole slave question." There he paused, and reflectively rubbed the blade of the axe with a palm. "I suppose you've been thinking it over yourself. How does it strike you?" He sat down on the log he had been cutting. "You fellows who'll be voting in a year or two more'll have a good deal to say about the thing," he added.

David had taken out his knife and was sticking

The Captain

it in and pulling it out of the bark. His face was sober.

"I don't know just what I do think," he said, deliberately. "You see, I haven't got any reason to think but one way. Uncle says slavery is right because it is. I can't just make out what that means, only he's read me parts of the Bible that back it up. He knows the Bible, if any one knows, doesn't he?"

"Yes, he can tell you a good many things that are in the Bible, but the Bible doesn't settle the question exactly, as far as I've read it."

"Then," went on David, "father always had slaves, and he did about right by everybody. Most of the people that amount to anything round here have slaves, too."

"Yes, but some of them aren't prejudiced on that account. Now there's Doctor Shirley. He reads a good deal. He's a fair-minded man, from all I've heard."

David's face clouded. Then he laughed. "Yes," he said. "But the doctor wouldn't undertake to talk about that, I reckon. It would be too much like getting into an argument. It always goes back to books, or bugs, or butterflies, anyway, when you start out with him."

"Then ask Colonel Marshall."

"I'd hear nothing but what was bad about the abolitionists, and how the country was going to the devil. No, that wouldn't do."

"Well, then, ask that Miss Pinckney up at the Colonel's. She isn't against abolition."

David rocked on the log. "I should say not. I wouldn't dare ask her. She'd hand me a Boston pamphlet, and give me advice all the other way. Captain, I guess it comes back to you," and, seriously, "and *you* own slaves, too. I don't see why I shouldn't think the same way."

"Well, maybe you do." The Captain was watching the knitted, sun-browned face.

"I'd like to get it all put before me square and fair by some one who didn't try to make one side a bit stronger than the other," said David, and halted. Suddenly he looked up. "Now, why wouldn't you do that?"

The Captain smiled. "I couldn't," he said. "I wouldn't do. I'm a slaveholder. You just said so yourself."

"But you're square."

"Am I? I like to hear you say it. It's just because I want to be square that I won't try to lay the question out for you. I don't know but that I've got my mind made up. They don't think much of abolitionists in the army, you know."

"Then I guess I've got to wait till I can work it out for myself. If I go to college, I will. I've got the money to go. Father left it to me. By and by I reckon uncle'll say I can go."

"He ought to. But you'll have to decide before

you get through college. There's an election in two years; there'll be a good deal settled then. You want to have your say."

David made no reply. His brow was puzzled.

The Captain's face promised mischief. "I tell you what you do," he said. "Ask Lee to explain it to you. She's impartial, isn't she?"

David looked up suspiciously, but the Captain was inspecting the edge of his axe. "Lee," he began. Then something made his eyes sparkle. "I don't think she'd do."

"Why, I thought you swore by her?"

"Lee is all right," replied David. "But she has views about any one who tries to interfere with other people's affairs. And that's what she says these abolitionists are trying to do. She writes to a cousin of hers down in Mississippi, — Miss Pemberton. She read me one of the letters she got from her the other day. She asked me if it wasn't splendid. 'I wish Beatrix was here,' she said. 'Wouldn't we have fun with the people who aren't sure about abolition!' She looked right at me when she said that, Captain. There were sparks in her eyes. And — well, I don't reckon Lee would tell me what I want."

"Maybe not." The Captain's lips twitched. "But it wouldn't hurt you to try."

"No-o. But I'd just as lief not run any risks."

"David," said the Captain, impressively, "do you

know what I begin to believe? You're afraid of her." The speaker's face was composed as he explained, "I mean, you let her impose on you."

David's lips settled. "I don't do that. But I like her."

"And she knows it, and you don't mind if she does?"

"Not a bit. Why should I?"

"No reason in the world. But she does about what she wants with you. Now, doesn't she?"

With David it was all suddenly become serious. Within him at times there leaped a decision which locked his jaw and made him quiet but very determined. Then those who faced him forgot that he still lacked more than a year of his majority. "Well," he said, steadily, "I wouldn't let Lee make me do anything if I wasn't —"

He halted. The Captain turned his head quickly. Somewhere from the woods had come a cry. It was repeated while they waited. "David! Oh, David!"

The Captain looked across. A red spot glowed through the tan of David's cheek. His lips had parted involuntarily as if to answer.

The Captain's gravity broke down. "It's no use," he said. "She knew what you were saying. The rebellion's over. You've got to give in."

The words brought David's chin up. The Captain

saw it, and repented. "Oh, go on," he advised. "Answer her, anyway."

Again clear and from closer range came the call, "David! David! — oh — David!"

David did not speak, and thrust his knife into the bark of the log. The Captain interposed. "You ought to go. It's all my fault. I didn't mean what I said just now." There was an ominous silence, and he added, "If you don't, you're only showing that she can plague you. Go on. She wants you. And I've got to work."

This time the blue eyes set themselves in a stare of steady inquiry. "I mean it," repeated the Captain.

David closed the knife and put it into his pocket. "All right, then, I'll go." He called good-by to the builders of the bark house as he passed them, and plunged into the woods. But doubt laid hold of him as soon as he was among the trees, and he moved forward rapidly until fifty yards separated him from the clearing before he paused. Then he looked about, searching every open spot closely.

It was very quiet. Only the musical tinkle of a stream dripping over a mossy fall threaded the stillness. When he did not hear the "chug" of the axe, it flashed upon him that the Captain was listening. That made him angry. Lee probably was somewhere near by, laughing at him. He

wished he had remained in the clearing. But he was started, and must go on out of shame.

He put a hundred feet more between himself and the clearing, each moment hoping to come upon her. But only the boles of the trees and here and there a clump of laurel were in sight. He swung a dozen yards to one side, made a wide half-circle, and beat up every bush and fallen tree, halting abruptly now and then. He had the idea of surprising her should she move from her hiding-place. Then, when he was close to where he had begun his hunt, he sat down on a stump and listened.

A thrush called presently, and, as if it were a signal— it seemed but a score of feet behind him — sounded again the mocking, "David! Oh, Da-vid!" He whirled about at the first syllable, and dashed in the direction whence it came, head up. Suddenly his foot caught in a root, and he fell headlong with a crash.

With the sound of his fall it was as if some one softly whistled near at hand. From the direction of the clearing came an echo like a laugh.

He leaped to his feet. For a moment he stood with clenched hands. Then he spoke steadily, "All right, Lee. You might as well come out."

Then was a brief wait, and he spoke again, no louder, and as evenly as before. "Lee, I'm done hunting for you. Where are you?"

This time there was an answer. "Why, here,

David!" He turned about. In the shadow of a spruce, twenty feet away, he saw a girl of sixteen, all the slimness of her years modelled by the simple lines of her dress, her brown curls caught behind the head with a bow of bright ribbon, her face raised saucily, her gray eyes sparkling. She dangled a broad hat by its strings. "I came out because you were so cross," she said. "But I've been here, oh, so long! waiting for you to find me. Have you been very far?" The puzzle of a tiny frown was set between her eyes, but in her parted lips was the beginning of a smile, long familiar to him.

"Yes," he said, bluntly. "I have been. I passed that very spruce twice. You weren't there all the time."

"Who said I was?" she retorted. The frown was gone. He had yielded to her temptation to argue, and she was no longer afraid of him. "But I haven't been far away," she went on. "And you made such a beau-ti-ful circle. I watched you. And that stump you sat down on. I was sitting on it a minute before. I got up to make room for you. I would have grown tired waiting, only you looked so *very* mad."

"I wasn't mad."

Her eyebrows arched. She made a little mouth. Then, penitently, "Please excuse me! And it *was* mean of the Captain to listen. And just when you

tripped on that root, too. It was very sudden, wasn't it? Do you think he heard the — the bump?"

There was no reply. "Do you, David?" she persisted. "It was a pretty big bump."

The frown insisted on showing itself. She saw it, and leaned forward. "Oh, I forgot. Forgive me! Did it hurt much?"

"No," he said. "But if you are done, I think I might as well go on."

"*I'm* not keeping you," she answered. "Come on. I am all alone. But where shall we go? I came back home from my ride, and they told me some one had been there. So I came here — to look at the trees."

David looked straight into her face, but perceived no guile. It was all demure and pleading. The indignity put upon him was forgotten. "Well, then, I'll go with you," he said. "Where's your horse?"

"Tied to a rail down the road. Come on."

She led the way, facing him, now and then, with dainty, dancing steps, and cautioning him the while, "Don't forget the roots. Be *very* careful. Oh, there's a big one now — right under your nose." But she did not go toward the clearing, and presently the steady "chug" of the axe, which had begun again, died away on their left. They came out into the road. The brown horse cropped the

wiry grass by the roadside, and, after he had lifted his head and inspected them, continued his meal in peace.

For they had no need of him just then. Perched on the topmost rail of the old fence, she cross-questioned him about what he had been doing. She challenged him to guess the petals on a late flower. Once she puffed a feather into the air, and defied him to bring it back to her as it floated in the breeze over the bushes and among the trees. So half an hour passed. Suddenly she sprang to the ground with a little cry of alarm. "I must go right away. I reckon poor Daddy has been looking everywhere for me. You had no right to ask me to stop so long. Help me on Dick."

He lifted her into the saddle, and together they started down the road, Dick as if his famous speed was no more than a story of his younger days. David had a hand on the brown horse's side, and kept pace, while the rider talked and he listened.

They were opposite the clearing when the Captain's figure loomed through the trees, and, a moment later, came into the road.

In the hollow of one arm lay the axe, on a shoulder rode the baby; the other builder, of the bark house, trudged by his side. The Captain's slouch-hat was tilted up in front, and a level shaft of sunlight striking beneath the trees deepened the strong lines of his bearded face.

" So you found her, David," he said. " I thought you would. It's the right way. When you make up your mind to do anything, do it, if it takes for ever. Good-night."

He started up the road. They watched him until, at the bend of the road above, the sun sent back a last winking flash from the axe-blade. Then Lee spoke. " He said, ' Do it, if it takes for ever.' I believe that's the way he does."

" I'm sure of it," returned David. " He's out of the army, but when anything's to be done, and he's about, he's likely to be the Captain."

II

Mr. Mayhew and Some Others

HALF a mile from the clearing the road bent toward the hill, back of which Doctor Shirley's house stood. There, with a "good night," David left Lee, and struck across fields. On the other side of a swell of rolling land he skirted the stretch of woods which lined the roundabout course of Gravois Creek, in this dry weather a mere thread of water, and crossed its abrupt clay banks on a felled tree. A minute later he unlatched the gate at the back of his home. It was a small farm, but well kept. Behind the old house with its gallery was the double row of whitewashed cabins of the quarter. Smoke everywhere filtered from the chimneys of these. On the bench at the door of one a bent darkey, with snowy poll, cuddled the bowl of his cob pipe in both palms, and talked to himself. He raised his withered face and nodded as he returned David's greeting, then dropped his head and resumed his conversation.

From another cabin came the crash of falling tin-

ware and a burst of infant wailing. But this was quickly hushed, and, in the moment of quiet that followed, a very different sound fell on David's ears. From behind a small outbuilding, fifty feet away, came a soft voice. He could distinguish every word, and in his mind's eye saw clearly the figure of the slave standing there facing his uncle and hearing why it would be wisdom on his part not to repeat a certain fault.

"A kind master, a cool master, but a master always to your niggers," was a rule of conduct Felix Mayhew had often pronounced. "I never use the whip," he was wont to add, with reproach in his tones for those who might. David as often recalled the comment of 'Lias Tobe, "No, Mr. Mayhew don't use th' whip, but if I was his nigger I'd pray he would, if it would take th' place of his tongue!" 'Lias perhaps was a skeptic as to moral suasion. It is certain he was without reverence at times. When David loyally demanded an explanation of this remark he got no more than a significant shake of the long head with its humourous face and grizzled locks.

David himself was not sure of his own feelings. Yet at times, overhearing his uncle's softly spoken correction of a slave, he suddenly found his fingers curling. Perhaps it was to forestall such temptation that he walked quickly on and entered the living-room of the house.

The table was laid for supper, but the room was empty except for a cat which sat on the window-sill and blinked at the slow march of a line of chickens along the lane. David walked to the window, laid a hand on the cat's back, and stood there looking over the fields.

Beyond the road hedge they rolled away, a maze of stubble, to the upland ridges whose uneven tree-tops cut a purple comb against the red sky of the west. In one place a flood of flame poured between the shoulders of a lower hill, and set the end of the road on fire. To the south, the shadows had gathered in a ravine. Along the bottom a trail of mist marked the winding course of the creek. It was all familiar to him, and yielded a haunting sweetness which he drank in through every sense. It was absolutely still, and he had grown conscious of the silence, when under his fingers he felt the muscles of the cat grow rigid as the animal crouched. Then it sprang far out the window. At the same moment a soft voice behind him said, "David, good evening."

Every nerve in David's body had thrilled to alarm. There was an instant's pause before he could command the quiet "Good evening, Uncle," with which he turned. It was not a new experience. Again and again he had fought to master the momentary panic which he knew well had been the purpose of that stealthy approach. It was one of

his uncle's idiosyncrasies to enter a room silently. David knew that behind him Mr. Mayhew's lips had twitched with a spasm of vexation when he got that quiet answer.

His own face, however, was not more composed than that into which he now looked. Once again he was reminded of a coloured print in a book he had turned the pages of many times when his father was alive, ten years ago. It was the picture of some saint. In his uncle's face he saw the same pointed chin and thin lips, the same long nose with sensitive nostrils, the pale skin, high cheek-bones, and narrow brow framed in dark locks which fell almost to the collar and hid the tips of the ears. The resemblance ceased only at the eyes. Those of his uncle were hazel, changing colour, the pupils expanding to every shadow, or pulling down the lids as if offended by a glare. Once he had stared at them until his uncle spoke. "Yes, they hurt me. It is the sunlight, perhaps. But they are all I have, David. I must not complain." There was something behind the rebuke which never allowed it to be forgotten.

Indeed Felix Mayhew lacked much that other men enjoyed. As he limped noiselessly across the room on his padded crutch, and swung himself into the big chair which David drew into place at the head of the table, his shrivelled left leg and frail body were pitifully evident. He laid one hand on the table, and the tapering nails of the long fingers,

which usually he curled so that they were concealed by the palms, clicked on the surface. . .

David at the signal bowed his head, while his uncle repeated the grace without which no meal in the house was begun. Then he began eating with healthy zest.

Mr. Mayhew ate more leisurely. He picked at what lay before him with mincing daintiness, his head slightly inclined. It was as if he had no appetite. But his eyes never left his plate, and once he selected a morsel his head came lower, and his teeth sank into the food and tore it apart with little sideways jerks of the jaw. It was part of a nervous affliction. David knew this, yet instinctively avoided the sight. But presently the silence drove him to speak, and he asked, "Were you out driving this afternoon?"

"No," Mr. Mayhew replied, without raising his eyes. "I have been around the house since you left for Doctor Shirley's. I was in the house most of the time."

"Hasn't any one been here?"

"No one."

There was a pause, then his uncle asked, "Well, what did the Captain have to say?"

David's answer was begun before he realised that he had said nothing of seeing the Captain. "Nothing much, except that in two weeks —"

"He would be ready for the raising of his house?" his uncle finished in an even voice.

David was looking across the table at him. He had a sensation which was not fear, but akin to it. His uncle's prescience was uncanny. Familiarity with it rendered it no less startling.

The pale face opposite remained bent over the plate. With a quick gulp David mastered the impulse to exclaim. "Yes," he assented, "the raising. Will you send him any help?"

"I shall send two men. He needs help."

There was an inference in the statement that stirred David's loyalty. "He is asking no favours," he said. "He has done all the work on the house himself so far."

"Yes, so I have heard. It is not a favour I am doing, but a duty. I hope he will succeed."

"Why shouldn't he succeed? He has as good a chance as any one. He's honest and hard working. He knows what he's about."

"Of course. Perhaps he will succeed. And he has one advantage which is very valuable. He knows his weaknesses."

The bearing of this was not clear. And David, as he was something of a ruminant in mental habit, did not ask for an explanation. He had an idea it would not satisfy him if it was given. The meal was near its close before his uncle spoke again.

"Does the Captain ever talk of — slavery?"

"Not often, but he did speak of it to-day."

"What does he think? He has been a good deal among men; he should have something to say."

"He doesn't know what he thinks," answered David, bluntly.

Mr. Mayhew raised his head and his eyebrows with it. "That is rather strange. He is a man of opinions. With Kansas at our very door, and he an army man so lately, and the Washington government so involved. — It is queer — now that he is free to speak."

If David had been less concerned about what seemed a covert attack on the Captain, he would have wondered at the suddenness with which his uncle swung into the remark, "But perhaps, after all, it is not so strange. He is wise who does not commit himself. There are a good many things going on which it is just as well not to talk about. The time may come for talking and — doing — later. I think I wouldn't try to decide quickly about this abolition question if I were you."

It did not seem to David that a reply was called for.

"You heard what I said?" repeated his uncle.

"Yes, I heard. But that is one of the very things I want to understand."

Mr. Mayhew's glance travelled over the face opposite him so swiftly that it seemed no more than a chance look, but in the moment he saw enough.

"Understand it, you said? That is proper enough if you *can* understand. But don't try to make others understand what you haven't had the chance yet to form a safe opinion on. There is a lot of foolish talk."

When supper was finished, Mr. Mayhew took the arm offered and was helped to the chair which stood for him by the west window, with a lamp on a table near by. This was a fiction which no amount of independent activity on his part was allowed to discredit. It was followed, as it was every night, by the advice in a voice of patient resignation, "Don't forget to give thanks for your own strong legs, David," to which there was no response. Something in the monotony of the utterance made it impossible. It was not a lack of reverence. A simple faith to which he never alluded was deep in David's heart. He carried the Bible to his uncle's chair by the window, as he always did at this hour, and laid it on the crippled knees. Mr. Mayhew sat with his chin in one hand, gazing out the window.

David went toward the door. "I am going up to the store for a while. I will be home early."

His uncle did not look around. If the lamp had been turned higher, there might have been seen an expression of swift calculation in the contracted eyes. But the answer came in a quiet voice, "Very well, good night."

As the night breeze brushed David's face, he

drew in a long breath and threw back his shoulders. In his uncle's presence he had an odd feeling of separation from his self. It seemed as if the beatings of his heart were being counted, that a single irregularity would be the signal for an inquiring glance from the eyes which never seemed to rest on him, yet of which he was always conscious. He walked to the fence, and stood leaning against the gate-post. Here he felt free. Through the shivering leaves of an elm overhead, he marked a single bright star, and drew in draughts of the clear night air.

By and by an approaching step brought his eyes to the road, and out of the darkness grew a tall, angular figure. "Hello, 'Lias," he called. "Going to the store?"

The man stopped. "Yes. Come along. You'll get sunburnt there."

David unlatched the gate and went out. "I was waiting for you," he said. At the store in the evening, there was usually a little gathering, — the ne'er-do-weel of the settlement, Tom White, always ready for an argument and generally wrong, but with a pliant tongue; a farmer or two with an idle hour to spend in story-telling or gossip. It was the clearing-house for news of the neighbourhood. With a school training better than most of them, and a mind which needed only the opportunity of occasion to wake to its power, David was perhaps better equipped than were most of them to grapple

with the questions which they settled offhand. But many things besides the abolition question were as yet formless to him. He caught at loose ends and unravelled them to find they were nothing more. For the most part he was a silent member of the circle, doing his own thinking, toiling behind the march of debate, examining but seldom challenging aloud the truth or wisdom of statements.

It may have been well for him that he did spin his opinions slowly. The wisest men in the country, in that autumn of 1854, were puzzling their wits and picking their words in the effort to find a way out of the maze into which the blindness of many, the passion of a few, and the force of that great indefinite factor, circumstance, had led them. Every day they were entangling themselves more hopelessly.

Across an imaginary line running midway from the Atlantic to the Pacific they watched one another with jealous eyes, and between them in a parcel of land, a few years before unnamed, they saw the murders of the Great Tragedy being rehearsed. The mighty figure of a Douglas, the greatest orator of them all, trod the soil of a free State, and cried his salvation into many ears, and yet was but a blind leader of the blind. Their chief magistrate, urbane, punctilious, preaching forbearance before all else, was willing to accept the tangle if only it could be kept from growing worse. One, who a few years

later was to call himself President of some millions of these men, each day drove them by his counsel to where escape was impossible. In a State of the Middle West, a tall and toil-worn man, as yet almost unknown except to those who had heard the homely wisdom with which his homely Christian name was coupled, tilted his long legs in the office of a grimy little back room, and threshed out for himself the reasons for the decision upon which he was to stake his chances against the mightiest orator of the day, and stake, too, the fortunes of his country and a thousand thousand lives.

In David's neighbourhood they knew of what was at their doors, and guessed at the rest. They argued it out to suit their several plans, and in their several ways. Kansas — the battle-ground — was but a few miles west. There deeds were doing in which more than one Missourian had his part. The salt taste of blood had awakened them to the realities of a principle which, again and again, had seemed likely never to be more than a principle. But the leaven of abolition would not be suppressed. From the highest to the lowest they felt its power, and were inflamed to passion or inspired to reason. They met to strive with one another, to deride, condemn, threaten, or give warning of what would happen — some day.

On such a discussion David and his companion came. A dozen men were seated on the porch of

the store on convenient boxes and broken chairs. Against the sides of an upturned barrel Tom White himself kicked his heels, while he turned in his cheek a piece of tobacco, and delivered himself of opinions.

"I said it," he declared, as David seated himself with his back against a post; "most of them abolitionists is a pack of hypocrites. They don't want the niggers themselves, and they're trying to keep the rest of us from having them. All the while they're whining that 'it ain't right.' What ain't right? That this is a free country, and each man should have his say? That a man shouldn't have what he's bought and paid for? Ain't that right? If it ain't, I reckon some of us is about ready to change our minds about these United States. If a man ain't got the right to hold niggers in the new part of the country, then he ain't got the right to do it in the old — maybe. And that means — it means *get out,* and start fresh."

"That's darn fool talk," remarked Jim Hilton. Hilton was a Kentuckian, and a follower of Mr. Pierce. "You know as well as I do," he added, "that when it comes to a vote, there won't be any getting out."

"You wait and see," returned White. "There's a pile more people thinking that way already than you reckon. There'll be more yet. This abolition business is getting too strong for a good many —

right here in our own country. Look what was said when Johnson turned his niggers loose. And you only got to go over to the Barracks to hear what the army people think about it."

"Whatever you hear about the army people is hearsay, anyhow. And, besides, they don't all think one way, I reckon. There's the Captain. If what he does, goes for anything, he ain't any too red-hot against abolition."

White laughed scornfully. "He ain't too red-hot about anything, when it comes to that. If he has any ideas, he keeps 'em bottled up so no one'll ever find 'em out."

It was well known that White had been quietly but effectively suppressed by the Captain soon after the latter came into the settlement, and that as a result he could find nothing bad enough to say about him. And, though more than one of those present suspected that he would have a like experience if he tried to force an acquaintance with the sober man in the old army clothes, it was good to laugh at the single man who had tried this and found out his mistake.

"Oh, come now, that ain't fair," rejoined Hilton. "The Captain don't tell all he knows, but I reckon he does a pile of thinking. As for work, look at the way he tackled that job of house-building. How's it getting on, anyway? David, where are you? You've been up there lately."

"It's almost done," said David. "He told me to-day he thought he'd be ready for the raising in about two weeks."

"Is that so? Now, he *must* have been working."

"I wonder how he's going to get on at farming," remarked Abe Happel, the storekeeper.

"I reckon he won't get on at all," scoffed White. "A farmer boy, was he? I'd like to see the farm he runs. He tried his hand at it out at Fort Vancouver, I'm told. Thought he knew it all. So he started in to raise potatoes. Somebody says he got a slapping big lot of them. Well, if he did, nobody wanted 'em. There was more thereabouts than they could eat. He lost every cent he put into 'em. What kind of farming is that? And he ain't much better at raising cattle and hogs, if the stories is right. He tried it out on the coast, and lost about everything in it he didn't lose raising potatoes."

"Well, there's one thing he didn't lose out there," put in 'Lias Tobe. It was his first word.

"What's that? His head?"

"No, his grit. He'll never give up. He didn't lose his honesty, either. There ain't any one ever knew the Captain but will tell you that. He's too honest for himself sometimes. Did you ever hear about his buying a horse? I heard it when I was in his company down in Mexico."

"Some fool trick, I suppose," sneered White.

"Maybe you'd call it that. Anyway, it'll never

happen to *you*. It was when he was about twelve years old. His father sent him to buy a mare from a neighbour. He told the boy to offer forty dollars for the horse. If he couldn't get it for that, to offer forty-five. He was to pay fifty if he had to. The neighbour didn't give the Captain a chance to make a bid. 'How much did your father tell you to pay,' he asked. The Captain was thinking of what he had been told, and answered right off the handle, 'Why, he said to offer you forty dollars. If you wouldn't take that, to give you forty-five or fifty.'" 'Lias paused. "The Captain brought the mare back all right," he finished. "Her price was *fifty* dollars."

A roar went up from the porch.

"I reckon he wouldn't do any better than that right now," White remarked. "He knows about as much about horses as he does of cattle or hogs."

There was a twinkle in 'Lias's eye. He hitched himself around. "Now, is that your idea? Well, look here! I'll bet there ain't a man in the country knows as much about horses or can get as much out of one fairly as the Captain. I'm willing to lay a bet on it with you, right now."

White blustered, "Why, he ain't got a horse to his name, he ain't ever driven one since he came, unless it was somebody else's. What's he ever done with horses?"

"He's done about everything with 'em. Beginning when he was a boy and rode a trick pony at

the circus that had thrown off everybody that tried him, he's been riding and driving horses all his life. In the army they used to say that there wasn't a rider like him. I know what he did at Monterey in '46, when he hung over the side of his horse on a dead run with every Mexican in range pulling trigger on him to stop him from bringing up reinforcements. And I heard one of the officers up at the Barracks say that, not more than a year ago, he saw him leap a battery of four guns without touching 'em. At West Point it was the talk that there wasn't one of his squad could come near him on horseback. When he was stationed at Detroit he had a black mare that he could put over a mile in two-fifty-five, and with two men behind her, too. I reckon the Captain knows a few things about horses."

"It's more than he knows about niggers, anyway," White persisted. "I came by him in the field a month or so back. He was working with the niggers, and they were giving him the heavy end of the job. And if he wasn't taking it, too! I stood and watched a bit. Then I yelled over to him if he didn't reckon they was getting the best of him. I'll be damned if he didn't shout back that maybe they was, but it wasn't worth fighting about."

"Worth fighting about!" The conception was too much for comment. White's sallow face contorted. He plucked disgustedly at the tuft of black

hair beneath his chin, then spat far out beyond the porch.

"He is a mite too good-natured with the niggers," acknowledged Abe Happel. "And they know it."

"Well, he's got a right to be, ain't he?" said 'Lias. "They were bought and paid for, weren't they? If he ain't got that right, why, I reckon 'some of us is about ready to change our minds about these United States.'"

A chorus of yells and the stamping of feet informed White that he was repaid in his own coin. For the moment he had no reply ready. He leaned forward. "Well, it don't make much difference what *he* does," he affirmed. "He ain't any account. He was discharged from the army because he couldn't keep away from the bottle. I guess everybody knows it."

There was a pause. They had heard the story; most of them believed there was truth in it. David had heard it, too. But to him that mattered not. White's words sank slowly into his mind. It was several seconds before he realised their meaning. Then he got to his feet, and he said, steadily, "That's a lie!"

"A what? Did you call me a liar? You damned young whelp!" White slipped from the barrel. "Apologise, you whipper-snapper! Apologise, or I'll give you a licking that you'll never forget!"

"It's what I mean," David repeated. "If you

say the Captain was discharged from the army for being drunk, you are lying."

White made an angry movement forward, his fist clenched. Abe Happel reached out a hand, and 'Lias leaped to his feet to interfere. But none of them was quick enough. A figure had walked quietly up on the far end of the porch.

It was the Captain. He had not heard White's words distinctly; he only saw the uplifted arm, and David standing straight and stiff on the step of the porch, the light of the lamp within the store falling through the open door upon his face, which was pale but unafraid.

"What's the matter?" he asked, quietly. "Something gone wrong?" Perhaps he was smiling.

For two seconds surprise sealed White's lips. The rest were leaning forward. They were curiously interested to see what would happen. White was a bully, and he perceived what he thought was a great chance.

"Nothing much, Captain," he said, changing his tone to one of smooth tolerance. "We were just having a little argument — about you army fellows. I said you got a good bit of credit you didn't earn — you always had to be bigger than the other fellow to whip him. Now, let's suppose you wanted to go into the store here."

"That's where I'm going," said the Captain, gravely.

White grinned. "So? Well, I'm right between you and the door. Now, how are you going to get there?"

"I'll go around." The Captain moved to one side.

White immediately made a step, blocking the way. "But how about it now?"

"Well, *now*," said the Captain, and all at once his voice hardened and his bearded jaw stuck out, "I'll have to clear the road." Both his arms shot out. White was seized by the collar and jerked forward so suddenly that it looked as if his legs had been struck from under him. He came down upon the porch with a crash, his collar still twisted in the other's grip so that he choked.

"Is that plain?" asked the Captain. "If it's not — I am going into the store. When I come out!" He loosened his hold, and straightened up, then turned on his heel and went through the door.

III

Way
OF A MAID

MISS SHIRLEY had parted from David with ideas stirring in her mind of which her serene countenance as she said good-bye was no reflection. Chief of these was the discovery that preservation of her privileges and due respect from him required prompt discipline. She had yielded before this to his masterful coolness, but, for the first time, she was sufficiently indignant with herself to contemplate reprisal. She decided that she had been conveying the honour of her friendship with entirely too free a hand. It was not a question of her liking for him; it was a duty she owed to herself. He must learn that his company was a thing of which she was properly careless.

In this frame of mind she mounted Dick the following morning, and rode over to Kitty Marshall's. It was an hour when all precedent said she should be stationed on the porch in a shady corner with her sewing. So her approach to the wide doors of old Colonel Marshall's place brought fluttering down the

steps the delightfully inconsequent person of Kitty herself — Kitty, with bright curls tucked under a cap which was a trap for everything but dust; an apron covering her to her plump bare arms and dimpled chin, being the badge of rebellious servitude to the task of house-cleaning required by the utilitarian views of Aunt Sarah. On tiptoe she stood and delivered herself of her mingled joy and surprise in repeated squeezes of Lee's extended hand and a volley of questions. What had happened? Where was the sewing? Was it a visit for all day?

"Nothing has happened," was Lee's answer. With the thought of her purpose she rallied a careless expression and made a simple yet incomprehensible explanation of Dick's need for exercise, an unexpected dearth of sewing, and an inadvertent turning up the road to Kitty's home. All of which served to parry Miss Marshall's immediate questions, but did not satisfy her curiosity.

So, while Lee talked about a new hat which had just come from St. Louis, of the warmth of the day for the season, of the misbehaviour of Dick, and of a party which was in prospect at Nina Rennert's, her listener, with fingers twisting the apron-strings, lay back in a rocking-chair on the porch, and with ingenuous blue eyes tried to look into her companion's mind and discover the real reason for the visit.

But half an hour had passed, and Lee, with a

particular question tripping on her tongue, finding gossip a trifle difficult, rose to go. And thereupon remembered, quite by accident, that she had heard the Captain was to have his raising "some day next week." Wouldn't it be worth while to ride over together and see it?

Not for an instant was Miss Marshall deceived. Somewhere ambushed in this suggestion was the important news. But she answered, carelessly enough, "It seems to me I did hear something like that. Next week, you say?" and began to tuck in a stray curl by the aid of her pretty reflection in a window-pane. She still wondered why on earth such a fuss should have been made about this. Lee's next words did not make it clear.

"Oh," she said, "you don't care to go, then. I thought it might be interesting. When are you coming to see me?"

Whereupon Miss Marshall answered straightway, "I'll come to-morrow. Then we can decide whether to go or not. I think I will go. I'll ask Oswald Roner to go with me. You'd better change your mind. Ask David to go."

Lee had gathered the reins in one hand, her foot was in the stirrup. With the other on the mounting-block, she paused. "Maybe I will. You ask Oswald, anyhow. You can stop for me if I go. It's on your way."

Kitty nodded. "But don't forget David." She had been watching. She was sure that more than the necessities of mounting turned the brown head so persistently away. She waited for a reply; then repeated, "Send him word to-day."

"Who?" asked Lee. "Oh, you're talking of David. No, I reckon I won't. I heard him tell the Captain he would come to help him at the raising. But we three can go together."

"Oh, of course, and we'll stop for you. I'll see you to-morrow."

But as Lee waved a good-bye at the end of the lane, her hostess dropped a little curtsy and wagged her head. "So you heard David say he would help the Captain?" she mocked. "And so, of course, you wouldn't think of asking him to ride with you? Oh, no! Not for anything!"

She turned and walked slowly to the end of the porch, twisting the apron-strings diligently. "Now, what has David done?" she said, aloud. "It never happened before. Or what are you trying to do, Miss Shirley?" She was silent while she chased an ant along the porch railing with a finger-tip. Then she laughed. "Well, I can wait until to-morrow afternoon — if I have to." And with that she ran into the house singing to a tune all her own:

"'And may I go with you, my pretty maid?'
'No, thank you kindly, sir,' she said."

It was a tune to which she had suddenly taken an immense liking. A dozen times that day she hummed it to herself.

The next morning she drew a sheet of note-paper to her, and for several minutes sat considering. Her elbows were on the table, and she nibbled the end of the penholder. It was an extremely delicate note to frame, but, once settled on, the pen flew fast across the paper. Five minutes later, the missive in the pocket of Uncle Bobby, on mule-back, was started for its destination. Kitty herself made a quick toilet for riding, and took the road. But it was not the road to Lee's, but the long one which ran toward the Barracks and into the main road to St. Louis, a mile above the Mayhew farm. Once there she pulled her horse in, and travelled at a pace which indicated that she had come out for leisurely enjoyment of the beech and oak and chestnut now preparing to pay their russet and gilt toll to winter.

The mellow beauty of autumn was in field and wood and hillside. The haze of Indian summer enveloped the ridges and made dim blue the distances in which the road curved and lost itself around the base of a hill. A checker-board of dun and gold stubble and the brown of ploughed ground was spread upon the slope on one hand; on the other a tangle of underbrush hid the stumps of last year's cleared land.

It may have been that Kitty was sensible to the

peaceful charm of the country. But her eyes said she was not. They roamed the stretch of road ahead with restless movement. They did not seem to be satisfied with what came within their view. When she had mounted the slope which looked down on the Mayhew farm and its buildings, and the stretch of lawn with its locust-trees in front of the house was almost at her feet, she drew up abruptly, regarding with plain vexation the white, barred gate and the deserted driveway. Perhaps it was only impatience with solitude, perhaps it was displeasure with such signs of inactivity at a late hour of the morning. At any rate, when a mounted figure came around the corner of the house she laughed softly. "It's all right, Duke," she whispered in her horse's ear. "We didn't come for nothing, after all. Now we will hear what Mr. Ford has to say." Then with a pat of the curls and a contented glance at the toe which persisted in showing itself beneath the edge of her skirt, she cantered forward. All at once something in the blending colours of a distant clump of trees fixed her attention. Only when the thud of hoofs had grown too loud to be ignored longer, she saw she was not alone on the road. It required a second and a third look even then to prepare her for a recognition of David. But there was no mistaking her greeting. "Why, David!" she cried, and stopped her horse across the road. "How you made me jump! I have not been this way for

so long. I've met no one since I started. I was just trying to make out the place where the Captain is building his house. It's over there, isn't it?" She pointed with her riding-switch.

David had halted, but plainly was in a hurry. "Yes," he said. "Over on that ridge. But you can't see the clearing from here. Are you going there?"

"I? Oh, no. At least, not now. But I may on — What day is the raising?"

"To-morrow week. I have to go on. I'm bound for St. Louis, and I'm late."

He lifted the reins and made as if to pass by. But Kitty was shading her eyes in an effort to see the clearing, and Duke took advantage of the chance to bar David's way. "To St. Louis," she repeated. "Then there's no use inviting you to ride with me. I am going to Lee's."

"So? I'm sorry I can't go with you." The reply was a polite acknowledgment, no more. Perhaps a shade of resentment crept into her explanation, "Yes, I am making up a little party to see the Captain raise his house. I asked Oswald Roner to go. I hope Lee will go, too. I reckon we'll see you there?"

"Yes, I told the Captain I would help him. But I've got to be going. Good-bye." This time Duke did not move, and the other horse swung round and passed him.

"If you see Oswald," called Kitty, "ask him to come over to Lee's. I think she wants to see him."

David's "All right, I will," came over his shoulder. It made the young lady he had left say very positively, "David Ford, I'd like to shake you." Then, after a pause, "But I reckon Lee knows of something better than a shake. And I'll help her. I will. I'll do all I can. It will serve you right."

But when Kitty was deep in one of Doctor Shirley's cane chairs in the big library, with its book-lined and glass-cased walls, and Lee, opposite her on a couch, was curled up in that mysterious Oriental fashion which generations of young women have adopted as the position for confidences, and which disposes so gracefully of the embarrassment of legs, the name of David Ford apparently was the last thing in the mind of either. Nina Rennert and her party, and next the Captain's house-building, were discussed. The probable success of the first, depending entirely, it seemed, upon the chance that Nina would wear a new frock and necklace sent from New Orleans by her grandfather, remained in the end a matter of reasonable doubt.

The Captain's house-building drifted into an exchange of opinions upon the Captain himself. Kitty remorselessly asserted that, if she had been the Captain's wife, she would not have married him unless he promised never, never to leave the army and

always to take her with him wherever he went. "It's a shame," she declared. "He might have been a general. Then *she* would have been at Washington or some place where there is lots of dancing and parties and things all the time. Instead, he is a farmer, and they haven't any money, and he does all the work himself. And he won't ever be anything else."

"I don't believe that," said Lee. "You ought to have seen him the other day. He had come out of the woods. He had an axe on his arm. It was just after — something had happened, and he was speaking of it. What was it he said? Oh, yes, 'When you make up your mind to do anything,' he said, 'do it, if it takes for ever.' He didn't speak very loud and he wasn't a bit excited. He didn't even shake his head. His eyes just looked bright and steady. But, Kitty, I wouldn't want to be the person that was against him when he started in to do something. I don't believe he'll be a farmer always."

"Well, maybe not." Kitty was judicial. "But father doesn't think he will be liked here. He says he's stiff and unsociable. Aunt Sarah hasn't met him, but, of course, she's sure he will get ahead."

"Why? Because the Colonel thinks he *won't?*"

Kitty laughed. "Partly. But also she's discovered that his father's people were Connecticut Yankees. You know what that means to her."

"Yes, and your Aunt Sarah is a pretty good captain herself."

Kitty drew a rueful mouth, and Lee went on. "I think your father's wrong. The Captain does laugh sometimes, and that stiffness is just his way. You ought to see him with those two little boys of his. And 'Lias told me that, when he was away out on the Pacific Coast and the mail had come in one day, he showed the Captain a letter he had from his family at home. He said the Captain smiled, and took out a letter and showed it to him. It had a baby's hand drawn on it, Kitty, — the Captain's baby. The Captain looked at it a minute. Then he put it back into his pocket quickly, and walked out of the room. 'Lias says his eyes were wet, and he'd never seen them that way before."

"Is that so? I didn't think he was that kind of a man."

"I didn't either at first. Sometime I'll get 'Lias to tell you about what happened when they marched across the Isthmus. It was horrible. Men fell down on the road choking with the heat and fever and chills and cholera, and 'Lias says the Captain never took his boots off the whole time, and was soaked to the skin every minute. But he never faltered, and kept saying cheerful things to everybody. He gave his last cent, to buy a horse for a woman, and then turned over his own horse to some one

else and tramped up and down, and never complained."

"I never heard anything about that," said Kitty. "I'm going to tell it to father. Perhaps he'll change his mind. But he has no patience with abolitionists."

"Why the Captain owns slaves; his father-in-law gave him four."

Kitty laughed. "Yes, he has slaves. But — well, it's disgusting the way he treats them, or rather the way they treat him."

"It *is* shameful," Lee admitted. "He's been out in the woods there for weeks, chopping down trees and hauling stones and everything else, and not one of those lazy niggers helped him worth a cent. It's a wonder to me he's done what he has. But —" she finished, gravely, "somehow, I like to see a man working that way. I want to see his house."

Kitty recalled her errand. "Then you're going with Oswald and me?"

"I'm going, of course. Didn't we arrange that?"

"Oh, yes, so we did. You and Oswald and I."

"Yes."

"And David! You asked him?" The question was casual. The questioner did not repeat it when Lee forgot to answer in a sudden recollection of something to be inspected in her room.

But as she followed her hostess up-stairs she was

humming in an undertone the persistent refrain which afforded her such pleasure the day before.

Whether or not this was contagious, the fact remains that the following afternoon it popped into Lee's head quite suddenly, as she saw David riding toward the house. For a moment afterward she hesitated between resolve to do her whole duty, or have the satisfaction of doing the thing which some one else least expected.

It was David who decided for her. He declined her invitation to come up on the porch. "No," he said, "he had come over only to ask her to ride with him to see the raising of the Captain's house. It was going to be on Thursday of next week."

Lee, perched on the porch railing, heard his news with a face that was all interest.

"Oh, is it?" she said. "I was wondering whether he had decided on a day."

She made no response to his invitation. A little puzzled, he asked, "You are going, aren't you? The Captain hoped you'd be there."

"Of course, I intend to go. I wouldn't miss it."

His face brightened. "I thought you were. Please be ready on time. I will come at three o'clock."

"Come? Where?" Her countenance was a map of mystification.

"Here — for you."

"But I'm not — I can't go with you," she

answered. "I've already promised to go — with some one else."

There is no denying that David stammered. But the surprise of the thing rather than disappointment spoke in his voice. "Why, I — I don't understand. I asked you to go with me."

"Did you? When? Oh, yes, just now. But you see, some one else asked me before. Oswald is coming here. I haven't told him what time I'll be ready. But I'm going. We'll see you."

If she expected David to remonstrate or to retreat upon his dignity, she was mistaken. "I see," he said, slowly. "I'm sorry I didn't ask you before. But I told the Captain I would help him, and at first I didn't think I'd have time to come for you."

"I don't believe you would," she answered. "Besides, I might not be ready when you came. It's better for me to go with Oswald. He isn't in a hurry to do something else."

David was sure this was a rebuke till he realised how cheerful was her face. "Well, I hope you'll have a good ride," he said. "I remember now, Kitty did speak about a party. I'll see you there."

"I reckon so. I've something to do for father. Good-bye."

She slipped from the railing as he turned his horse. But in the shadow of the doorway she remained until he was a hundred feet away. "It served you right," she said to herself. "I'm glad

I did it. I'll do it again." She repeated this to herself three times. Each time it was more emphatic. Then, because her gratification needed solitude for its complete enjoyment, she gathered up her skirts and walked slowly to her room, and locked the door behind her. It is immensely satisfactory to have done one's duty and to have taught a needed lesson at the same time.

It may have been with a desire to note how salutary this particular lesson had been, that she looked for David as soon as she drew rein at the clearing's edge on the afternoon of the raising. But for a few minutes she did not discover him. There were half a hundred men in the open space. A score of saddle-horses were tied to trees at one side. From the road came an occasional neigh from the dozen horses hitched there, among them the black mare that drew the light wagon in which Mr. Mayhew always rode. And, with the exception of Mr. Mayhew, who sat on a log at one side, his crutch by him and his eyes half-closed, every one in the clearing was busy. The logs were rapidly being rolled forward and put into place. Already the house walls were breast-high. At one corner Sandy, a powerful negro, one of the Captain's slaves, wielded an axe; at another a man sent over by a neighbour. At the third, 'Lias, with hairy throat and arms, worked opposite the Captain.

The Captain's coat was off, his sleeves rolled up,

and his hat cast aside, showing his compact frame, and strong, bearded face. His eyes were aglow. He gave directions with a quick decision that surprised some of those who had known him only at long range or on their own ground. He wielded his axe with vigour and skill, and the notches showed deep and clean at his end of the logs. For a short time the three on horseback watched with silent interest. Then Kitty spied David, who was busy with cord and chalk at a pile of logs on the other side of the clearing. She spoke to Lee.

"David? Oh, yes," was the answer, "I see him." But the gray eyes stole a glance across the clearing at the first chance. When she saw him look toward her, she nodded. Then she turned to Oswald. "Oh! there is that dreadful Sandy, of the Captain's. The one with red hair. Ugh! but I dislike him."

"Why?" said Oswald. "He's a nigger like the rest, and he's a good hand with the axe."

"But, he's — dreadful. He's so sullen. And he's treacherous. I'm sure of it."

"I don't like him, either," put in Kitty. "I never did."

Oswald laughed. "He's lazy, I reckon, if that's what you mean. But they all are. They need to be stirred up. That man is loafing right now. I reckon he wouldn't be that way if he belonged to Mr. Mayhew."

"No," said Kitty, quickly. "I am sure of that.

David's uncle is worse than Sandy. He gives me the shivers. He's creepy."

"What's that?" asked a voice. She gave a little start. "We were talking about — about that man Sandy. Isn't he horrible?"

"I don't like him," said David, bluntly. "He's been shirking all day. I'd speak to the Captain, only I know it wouldn't do much good." He turned to Lee. She was talking to Oswald. "You got here on time, after all?"

Her face came around swiftly. "Oh, how are you, David? It depends upon what you call 'on time.' I wasn't ready when Oswald came, if that's it," she added, in a lower voice.

He smiled. "Lee, you ought to get over that habit."

"What habit?"

"Keeping everybody waiting. Why don't you try?"

"Because I don't have to." Her face was challenging, but her voice was a little more decided than she had intended. She knew Kitty was listening.

But David's good humour was not disturbed. "That's the truth exactly," he said. "It is everybody's fault, but yours too."

"Thank you. So you think I'm spoiled. Don't let that annoy you. You needn't be one to assist in doing it." He laughed; and she was nettled into adding, "Hadn't you better go back to your work?

The Captain needs you — " She paused, and he finished for her, " More than you do, you were going to say. Perhaps he does. Anyway, I'd better see." He spoke quietly, but there was a shadow in his eyes.

She saw it, and was for telling him he was wrong. But just then Oswald broke in: " That nigger wants a whipping, if ever one did. Look at him! "

Sandy was moving sullenly to help pick up the end of a log over which 'Lias bent. 'Lias had called him twice, and now the red flamed in his face and corded neck. On the far side of the building they were having difficulty, and the crowd was looking that way. But one other person saw Sandy's slow movement. As Oswald spoke, the crippled figure of Mr. Mayhew approached, swinging forward on his crutch with surprising swiftness. He came from behind the negro. Suddenly he spoke to him. " Sandy," he said, " get to work at once. *At once,* do you hear? "

At the sound the negro's head jerked violently on his shoulders. In his face was dumb terror. But his hands were on the log instantly. His bended back straightened with such force and swiftness that 'Lias staggered.

" By thunder! " exclaimed Oswald. " Did you see that, David? It must weigh five hundred pounds."

But David did not answer. Instead he walked

quickly away. Kitty turned to Lee. "I'm not going to stay here. I'm afraid; I honestly am. Did you see that man's face? It was awful."

"Yes," said Lee, "it was. I'm ready to go, anyway." Oswald's protests and jokes were of no avail. When David looked for them a few minutes later, they were gone.

But if he guessed at why they left so suddenly, he made no allusion to it the next time he saw Lee. Indeed the day of the raising was not mentioned. Then, at the end of the month, Lee went away, and for two months they did not see each other. Kitty had gone on a visit to Boston, and Lee had gone with her. David was engaged with some business for his uncle, and this necessitated frequent trips to St. Louis.

The Captain's house was finished. It was a plain, roomy building, simply furnished, but well stocked with firewood from the trees on the fifty acres of land which his wife's father had given them.

The Captain christened it "Hardscrabble," with humourous appreciation of its rough appearance, and the task it had been to build it. But he was seldom away from it, unless when working elsewhere, or with his wife at a near-by merrymaking. He spent most of his evenings beside the fire, reading or talking to his wife. David passed many an hour

there. He was a first-rate checker player, but he was beaten every time.

Gradually people in the settlement were coming to know the Captain better. Most of them respected him for his solid, simple habits and his willingness to lend a hand when needed. He was proving that he meant what he said when he declared he would be a well-to-do farmer, if hard work would accomplish it. They liked him for this. But some of them could not understand the reserve which said "stand off" to any attempt at uninvited familiarity.

Colonel Marshall, who was one of the first to call on him, because he was a West Point man, did not see him often. And distrust of his sympathies on the slave question was an insuperable barrier. Each day abolition became a sharper issue. Over it friendship weakened and political opinions split.

The Captain went his way apparently unchanged and oblivious. "He attends strictly to his own business," said Major Wilkins, one day. Major Wilkins was stationed at the Barracks, and had met the Colonel in the Planters' Hotel in St. Louis. "He comes out to the Barracks occasionally," he went on, "and we talk over Scott and the Mexican War, or the days at the Point. Now and then, we have a wrestle over some question of campaigning. But that's about all. He don't talk politics often."

"But he's a Northern man, sir," objected the

Colonel, courteously. "I have seen him several times coming out of the office of the *Democrat.* Once I encountered him talking to the editor of that sheet in this very place. He is a Northern man, sir, an abolitionist, I repeat."

The Major shook his head. "I do not think you are correct," he said. "I believe he has no sympathy for this movement. All his people own slaves."

The Colonel was unconvinced. "That may be, but he is a man of his own mind. He is New England in his ideals. He will never change. My sister-in-law and I differ on many points, but she is a woman of discernment and she says this, and I agree with her."

"He is certainly not a Yankee in the management of his finances," returned the Major, dryly. "If he has a cent in his pocket, it's ready for any one who needs it."

The Colonel relaxed. "You surprise me, Major. I had no knowledge of this. I had an idea that he was, — well, rather careful where his money went. I must tell Sarah that. I really must," he added. The gleam of coming battle was in his eye.

David could have told the Colonel more on this point. One incident in particular there was, a pleasant recollection and a disturbing reminder. He had started — it was early in that spring — to go to the store, but had changed his mind and turned off up the road to the Captain's. It was a warm evening

hinting of the budding of trees. When he came opposite the log-house in the clearing, he saw the Captain standing at his doorway, puffing a pipe while he gazed across at a field over which the green haze of sprouting wheat spread a carpet.

He called to David to come in, and in the biggest of the four big rooms they sat down. The remains of a fire smouldered in one of the wide fireplaces. The room itself bore here and there the touches of a woman's hand. The Captain's wife, in a rocker by the fire, was darning stockings.

She welcomed him. "The children are asleep," she explained. "The Captain was just thinking of reading aloud a little while. My eyes trouble me. Would you mind if he did?"

"I'd like it," said David, "I'll sit here." He took a seat on the other side of the fire. The Captain, under the lamp near by, found the book. It was Irving's "Sketch Book."

He opened it and smoothed the page "It's an old friend of mine," he said. "Bulwer and Irving and Lever were my favourites once, and I haven't lost my liking for them."

Then he began to read.

But it was to the voice, not to the words that David found himself listening. It was not a remarkable voice, but clear, calm. It seemed that no other voice could so well have suited the place. There was comfort in the room, in the motherly figure

in the rocking-chair with the pile of much darned stockings in her lap, and her fingers moving nimbly, and in the rugged face of the Captain in the mellow light of the lamp. It brought back to David evenings which he could faintly remember. His voice was husky when the Captain asked a question. Just then they heard a carriage stop in front of the house, a moment later a knock. The Captain went to the door and opened it. Mr. Mayhew stood there.

David got up astonished. But his uncle said, "Good evening," quietly, and took the seat offered him. Then the baby cried, and the Captain's wife left the room.

"I've only come in for a moment," Mr. Mayhew said. "Perhaps you have heard we're trying to put up a little church."

"And you want me to contribute," said the Captain, promptly. "All right. I will. I don't go to church much. But we ought to have one. I'll give you five dollars."

"The widow's mite, you remember," remarked Mr. Mayhew. "It is more than — "

"It is not much," interrupted the Captain. There was a shade of annoyance in his voice. "You are welcome to it."

Mr. Mayhew folded the money in his wallet with care. The Captain was standing, so he rose as if to go. The Captain made no remark, and his visitor moved to the door. Just over the threshold he

stopped. He spoke to the Captain, who stood in the doorway. David heard the remark, "We have bad news from Kansas to-day," and the reply, "Yes." Then for several minutes he heard only occasional words. He had purposely walked to the end of the room. But he could not close his ears to the Captain's statement, "I have nothing to say about that. I have several slaves, as you know. What I will do with them is of no interest to any one but myself." Of the reply to this nothing was plain but the apologetic tone. A minute later there was the sound of departing carriage wheels.

The Captain closed the door and walked over to the fireplace. Presently he kicked a glowing log into a blaze and turned about. David's brain was busy. What he had overheard was surely strange. His uncle had cautioned him against speaking on this very question.

The Captain spoke. "Your uncle is very much interested in the abolition movement," he said. "I never knew it before."

IV

Colonel Marshall Prophesies

THAT summer David saw little of Lee. With her father she went to the Virginia Springs. Soon after she returned in the autumn, Nina Rennert took her on a visit to New Orleans. David wrote to her now and then. But he got more letters than he sent. Presently she complained of this. When he apologised that he was very busy, immediately she protested that she had too many places to go and people to see to write so often herself. There began to be longer intervals between the letters with the New Orleans postmark.

But David was occupied with something else, and deduced little from this. He did faithfully, his share of the work upon the farm, which his uncle every day put more and more upon his shoulders. Mr. Mayhew had taken an interest in a cotton business somewhere in Mississippi, David understood. There was much correspondence involved. Also there were many letters to be carried to or brought from parties in St. Louis. David

often was the messenger. But in spite of his work he was restless and silent. One night it all came to a head. He entered the living-room to find it dark, and his uncle's figure a blurred silhouette against the window-frame. Mr. Mayhew spoke to him at once, "David, there is no use worrying about this going to college. I have told you before why it is not wise. You have work here. There may be more for you to do soon. Can't you give up the idea of college?"

The sudden reading of his thoughts made David start, but he answered, plainly, "No, I can't give it up. I want to go. I don't want to stay here — a farmer. I will be twenty-one in less than a year. I have money of my own. I mean to go as soon as I have the right to go. But I'd rather you'd say that I can — now."

It was bluntly put. He looked for a rebuke; but none came. For fully a minute he stood in the dark, wondering what was passing in the face he could not see. His uncle's eyes, he knew, were studying his face as easily almost as if the sunlight streamed upon it. Then the answer came, and his heart leaped. "Wait until next year," his uncle said. "If your mind is the same way then, you can go." This was the last word between them on the subject for many months. But more than once David was aware that he was under observation,

and that his uncle guessed with what his thoughts were busy.

When Lee returned he spoke to her about it. She discussed his plans from every side. She was sure that he was right to go, but a little reservation tempered her remark, "It will seem very queer not to have you around."

He said it would be strange. He was sorry. But it couldn't be helped, could it? She must write to him often about what went on, — about Oswald, and Nina Rennert, and Nina's brother who was abroad, and Miss Sarah Pinckney, and the Colonel, and their conflicts. He would write to her whenever the chance came.

One evening they were in the library. Doctor Shirley had gone out. Lee was bending over a Latin grammar in a hunt for a word he wanted. The light burnished her hair. David suddenly saw that her eyes were not on the book at all. One finger was marking the leaf; she was gazing at the floor. There was a wistful droop to her lips. He did not comprehend all of its meaning, but he asked, "Will you really miss me so much?"

She caught her head back with a shamed start. The faintest colour touched her cheeks. "Of course I will."

He smiled to cover the embarrassment which surprised him as much as it did her. She saw the smile and her colour deepened.

"I reckon, though, I will manage to get along somehow," she added, lightly. "I felt about as bad as I could when Tom Rennert left. But I got over it," with a laugh. "And Oswald will be here. I like him very much."

Somehow this did not please David. She might have taken it more seriously. But the wish and the occasion for it were driven from his recollection. There was much to think of in the prospect of a year ahead. The choice of a college was important and unsettled. He took counsel.

Lee was for a Southern college. The University of Virginia was her selection. She had met several undergraduates at the Springs. They were all fine fellows and gentlemen. She had visited the old college buildings, and told him of their classic beauty and traditions of great men.

The Captain, when asked, pondered. But, in the end, he was plainly for one of the universities of New England, or New Jersey, or Pennsylvania. "You will meet men there," he said, "who will put new ideas before you. They look at some things from a standpoint different from the one you've been used to. It will do you good. All the knowledge of the world isn't tucked into this corner of Missouri — or into the South, either. And in some ways these two are a good deal alike. It never does any harm to hear both sides of a question."

"You mean abolition?"

"I mean any question, though I may have been thinking of that one. It's the biggest of all — bigger even than most of us estimate. Some of our people say it has all been patched up. Maybe it has. If it hasn't been, every man who's worth anything ought to know all that he can about it, — how long it is, and how broad and how deep it goes. It won't be settled in Kansas. It won't all be settled in these parts when the country makes up its mind to tackle it finally."

David was doing his own thinking on this point. Every day news came from across the western border which furnished a text both for slavery and antislavery men. From further south came mutterings and threats. In Washington, again and again, the House and Senate rose to its feet in wild applause or angry protest over words of no double meaning. Across the river a tall, ungainly man, in ill-fitting black clothes and rusty silk hat — the same whose logic and plain speaking had driven Mr. Douglas to the wall — was asking questions every day which stuck in the mind and called for a straight yea or nay.

With Colonel Marshall it was ever nay. He lost no opportunity to deliver himself.

"Good gracious!" cried Kitty, bursting in on Lee one afternoon and tumbling in a heap on a couch in the corner of the room. "I'm nearly exhausted. I fled here, Lee. I really had to. I

couldn't stand it a minute longer at home. Father and Aunt Sarah are at it — shovel and tongs. It began with an argument this morning. They hadn't finished it when I left. Every minute it was growing worse. It was dreadful. And it all started because Aunt Sarah threw father's copy of the *Missouri State Journal* into the fire. You ought to have heard the Colonel when he found that out."

Kitty drew herself up to her full height. She advanced on Lee with a countenance of scorn, pointing a finger. Then, overcome by the recollection, she threw herself back upon the couch and buried her laughter in a cushion.

Such scenes were not uncommon at the Marshall home. David, calling one evening to see Kitty, came upon a conflict which was waged so fiercely that his entrance was unnoticed.

The Colonel was standing on one side of the table by which Miss Sarah Pinckney sat. His arms were behind him, his head thrown back. "A nice pass it has come to!" he declared. "A nice pass, when a rascal disgracing his profession may boldly invade a territory with the offscourings of his crowded East at his heels, and set up a government against the will of the people, — yes, and against the will of the government at Washington of which you talk so much."

"I do not talk of it now," replied the spinster,

quickly. "It is none of mine. A weak-kneed, apologetic President, who is afraid of everybody!"

"He is your own, at any rate," returned the Colonel. "And he has appointed a governor for this territory of Kansas which your Connecticut rapscallion doctor and his rabble put aside. I tell you, madam, it will not do! We are patient. We are calm —"

"Are you speaking of yourself now, Henry?" inquired Miss Sarah.

The Colonel, whose arm had been raised for rhetorical effect, suddenly paused. For a moment he glared in silence. Then he lowered his arm. "No," he said, with a voice which he tried hard to control, "you know I am speaking of the gentlemen of this country — of the South, of this State of Missouri."

"Pray what has Missouri to do with Kansas?" There was a gleam of humour behind the spectacles. It should have warned the Colonel, but it did not. She had folded her hands in her lap, too, which was a sure sign that she was content with the way the argument was moving.

"What has Missouri to do with it?" repeated the Colonel. "It has everything. What has your Kansas Free Soil Party done?"

Miss Sarah smiled triumphantly.

"I know," she said, "that there was an election in Kansas on December 15th, and that the Free Soil

party was in a large majority, despite the bullying of your Missouri brigands, which you seem to have forgotten. You are continually harping on the rights of citizens, Henry. I wish you would be a little more consistent."

"Consistent!" trumpeted the Colonel. "Do you apply that word to me? Why, madam, no woman ever knew the meaning of the word! You are proving it yourself every minute with your professions of faith in the Union and its Constitution, and your underhand efforts to overthrow one of the institutions which it guarantees."

"I know nothing of the kind," returned Miss Sarah. "And you have not answered my question. What has Kansas to do with Missouri?"

The Colonel advanced a step. His arm was raised aloft, the fist clenched. "It has this to do with it," he said. "Missouri will never be ruled by any other State."

"Who wants to rule it?" sniffed the spectacles. "I wouldn't. It isn't worth it."

The Colonel ignored the insult. "But others are trying to," he shouted. "Do you know what they are saying in Kansas? — that, if slavery is impossible in Missouri with freedom in Kansas, then slavery in Missouri must die. Hear that, madam! It was uttered by your rapscallion doctor. He should be hanged! — hanged to the highest tree. And he will be — he will be — if he is not shot."

"Quite possibly he will be shot," remarked the spinster; and added, with withering emphasis on the last word, "It is more than likely he will be shot — in the *back*. You have introduced that sort of thing into Kansas, I understand." Her voice was shrill. She leaned forward, pointing a bony finger. "But remember this, Henry! Remember that for every drop of blood you spill in Kansas you will pay threefold. You will be made to regret bitterly."

The Colonel was shaken from his balance for only an instant. "We have shed no blood," he returned. "It is you who have done it. But we are not children to be frightened by such talk. We have the remedy in our hands. We do not need to shed blood. We will *leave you,* madam! That is what we will do — leave you to your money-grabbing and trafficking, to your free blacks and all your other iniquities and nonsense!"

Miss Sarah's head went higher. A bright patch burned in her cheeks. She opened her mouth as if to deliver an outburst, then checked herself. From her thin lips fell five words, "Henry, *you cannot do that!*"

If some one had cracked a whip over the Colonel's head it would not have made him jump more violently or have thrown him into a greater fury. The dry precision of the speech made it sting the more. One moment he stood speechless, his eyes blazing, his face an apoplectic purple. He put a hand to his

collar and plucked at it. "Good God, Sarah!" he cried. "Have you gone stark mad? If a State chooses by a vote of its people to leave this Union, do you imagine it can be detained? I have heard whispers of such insanity before, but never in this house. And never let me hear it again! Never! Never!"

The Colonel wheeled about as if unable longer to face such iniquity. And in the shadow he spied David. There was a pause.

David hastened to apologise. "I have not been here long," he explained. "At first I thought you saw me. Then I did not wish to interrupt."

It was a lucky word. The Colonel's sense of hospitality and shame at his violence restored his balance. He held out his hand. "You are welcome," he said. "And as you have heard my—er—recent remarks, sir, you must also hear my apology for their—impetuosity—in the presence of a lady." He turned about, and bowed. "I ask your pardon for my speech, Sarah," he said. "It was somewhat discourteous. I was tried — tried beyond my control. I said words, I am afraid, which I should not have employed."

Miss Sarah smiled. "It is forgiven, Henry," she answered. "I was somewhat out of temper myself, I suppose."

For a long time afterward the scene remained in David's recollection. It was a picture pregnant

with suggestion of a wider stage and many actors. The tall, slender figure of the Colonel, with white hair and goatee, his lean, proud face and dark eyes as he towered in indignation and strode back and forth, and the thin, straight-backed person of Miss Sarah, with hair brushed smoothly from her sharp features, who faced him with a spirit which matched his own, and a calmness which put him at a disadvantage, — these were typical of the two combatants in the great contest growing more violent every day.

It deepened, too, the doubt with which David wrestled. Fiery, vehement, jealous of his personal rights, uncompromising in his distrust or enmity for those who, he imagined, sought to deprive him of one of the privileges allowed him by the constitution of his forefathers, yet gallant and quick to repair a discourtesy, the Colonel represented in their full flower the ideals and principles which David had been taught to respect and cherish in the years of his earliest recollections, and which nothing about him, until recently, had contradicted. In the attitude and in the words of the Colonel's opponent he recognised a power and purpose which instinct told him could not be founded on deception, and which reason argued would bring about a better condition of things. Why could he not see further into the problem, and grasp the truth which he felt must lie somewhere between these two? He was

eager to know more. He was impatient with the months which must elapse before he could begin to gain that wider view and that greater knowledge which would enable him to choose his own path.

He talked of his doubts to the Captain many times. His errands to St. Louis gave him the opportunity. The Captain went there, sometimes twice a week, and David rode with him on his wagon. The Captain had bought two good horses — a black and a gray — and had trained them and handled them himself. Their pulling power was the talk of the district. Once they had drawn seventy bushels of wheat to the city. It was ten miles, and the road none of the best in places. The Captain was very proud of them. He was cutting wood from his tract of land, and hauling props and heavy oaken posts to the coal-mines. He sold many a load of firewood in St. Louis.

Walking at the heads of his team when the road was rough, or riding on top of his lumber beside David, he told stories. He rarely dwelt upon his own part in these exploits. His ideas were the plain common sense of long experience, in many places, among many men. But never would he say how he would decide the question which was troubling his companion. "Every man must think it out for himself," he affirmed. The talk usually returned to the subject of college.

On one of these journeys to St. Louis, the Cap-

tain had dumped his load of cord-wood into a cellar and put up his team. David was to deliver a letter for his uncle, and the Captain, bound to hunt up some of his army friends, was walking with him. They were passing the Planters' Hotel when a voice hailed them from the doorway. It was Major Wilkins.

"Captain," he called, "dinner's just ready. Come in and sit down."

"No," was the answer. "I won't do that."

"Why not?"

"Well, I'm not dressed for company."

"What difference does that make? Come in."

The Captain hesitated, trailing his whip on the ground. He looked at his long blue overcoat and high boots. But the Major insisted.

David said he had to go on. He would be back at the hotel in an hour. The Captain yielded. "All right," he said. "I'll come in, Major." He disappeared in the doorway coiling his whip, the Major sprucely dressed, by his side.

An hour later, when David returned, neither the Captain nor the Major was in sight. A score of men tilted chairs and smoked and talked, but there was no one he knew. While he stood and waited, his eye fell on a tall, broad-shouldered man across the lobby. Something in his dark, lean face held his attention. He looked a little more steadily than he intended, and presently the other walked

over. "I ought to know you, I guess," he said, "but I don't."

"No," said David, "and I reckon I ought to ask your pardon for staring at you."

"It doesn't matter. My name is Boone Hadley. I'm mighty glad to have the chance to come over and talk. I don't know any one here, though I ought to, being down here right often."

"You aren't a Missourian," said David. "I knew that soon as you spoke."

The other laughed. "That's right. I live up at Galena, Illinois, just now. But I come from Pennsylvania. I ought to speak a little like Southern folks do, though. My mother's people were from Virginia."

The conversation ran easily after that.

Boone said something about college. That autumn he was to enter the University of Pennsylvania, to study medicine.

It was David's chance. They went over in a corner and sat down. For half an hour David listened and asked questions. The Captain was forgotten until, looking up, he chanced to see Major Wilkins come out of a side door and glance about him. David got up. "I've got to go," he said. "I'm mighty glad to learn what you've told me. Are you coming to St. Louis again?"

"Well, I don't know. Not soon, I guess. I'm

plugging away at my books just now. But there's some one beckoning to you."

David looked over. "That's the Captain," he said. The Captain stood with Major Wilkins, turning his slouch-hat in one hand and striking at the floor with his whip. "He doesn't size up to most of the army officers I've seen," said Boone. "But he looks as if he would have his way if he had any say."

David did not repeat this remark on the way home, but he did talk about his new acquaintance and the University of Pennsylvania. "I believe I'll go there," he said. "I reckon I wouldn't get along just yet with New England ideas. And I'm pretty sure that the Southern college isn't what I'm after."

The Captain thought over the proposition. He agreed. "The college in Philadelphia is a good, solid institution, I've always heard," he said. "I've got a liking, too, for things in Pennsylvania. My mother came from there. I stopped in Philadelphia to see an aunt and to take a look about, I remember, when I was on my way to the Point. I don't believe you can do better than go there."

Dusk was falling when, at the cross-roads, they came upon a wagon stuck in the mud. It was loaded with logs, and the horses were standing with drooping heads. No one was in sight.

The Captain recognised the team. "It's Tom White's rig," he said. "I wonder where he is?"

He pulled up and got down and walked over to the wagon. He looked at the load. Then he called. In the dusk a head was raised above the fore part of the wagon, and Tom White answered, "Why, hello, Captain. I was busy fixing a trace. I saw you, but I didn't know you, and one team's passed by already and hadn't time to give me a pull."

"Well, I *have* time," the Captain said. He unhitched his horses and made them fast to the tongue of the other wagon. Then he spoke to his team. The black and the gray settled in their collars. The wagon lurched, and came up on the solid part of the road.

He silently unhitched his team. But as White put his foot on the hub of the wheel, the Captain spoke. "You're taking that load over for fire-wood, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"How much are you going to get for it?"

"About five dollars."

"Well, I'll give you half a dollar for it. And you can bring it along to my place right now."

White laughed. It was a weak laugh. His foot remained on the hub of the wheel.

"You'd better turn around and start," said the Captain. "That is, if you are going to sell me the wood."

White hesitated. "Well, I reckon I will, if you don't say nothing about the price you paid."

"I don't intend to speak of it," answered the Captain. "I want the wood."

White got on the wagon, turned his horses, and drove toward Hardscrabble. David did not speak. He did not understand. Nor did the Captain's manner invite conversation. But, when White had thrown out the wood behind the house and had driven off with his half-dollar, the Captain remarked, "You don't think I treated White squarely, do you?"

"No, I don't," returned David. "The wood was worth a good deal more. I don't know why he sold it to you."

"Because it was mine to start with," said the Captain, quietly. "It was cut off my lot — down by the creek. The logs had my mark on them." There was a twinkle in his eye. "That half-dollar I gave him was for — the hauling."

V

A SQUARE PEG IN A ROUND HOLE

DAVID went to college. It was on a September day that he said good-bye to Lee. She drew her hand from his slowly, then turned and ran up the steps of the porch. Something blurred his last glimpse of her.

But the Captain drove him to St. Louis, and the Captain had stories to tell. They were stories of West Point and of college days. What wonder that, with his face set toward the east and the promise which it held, the slim figure which had fled so suddenly slipped from his mind.

In St. Louis he parted with his uncle. He remembered longest with curiosity the crippled body, propped on a crutch spread like the leg of a derrick. They had fought out the question of college long before, and few words passed between them.

So David entered upon a new life which has but small place here. But there were letters. The first of these came back within a week. He was quartered in a third-story back room in a big house on Arch

Street. Boone Hadley had met him. He reminded Lee that Boone was the one who had decided him to come here. And he believed they were to be good friends. They were living together. He had been to the college, and was sure he had made no mistake.

This letter found a resting-place in an old, folding mahogany writing-desk with the initials L. S. inlaid in mother-of-pearl on its top. There it was joined from time to time by letters in the same writing. A day came when there seemed to be no room left for another, and a slim hand took them out and turned them over often.

But David did not know this. There were few idle evenings in the winter months of those four years. His mind was full of his books and lectures, and with other things which grew to mean more and more to him. For these were the last four years in which a nation learned the simplest and most profound of truths, — that a principle which can rightfully be defended cannot be compromised. And those who were to guide this nation and carry out its commands were thinking hard while they worked in the field, the shop, the counting-room and office.

In a little settlement on the banks of a Missouri creek, one of these men, in weather-stained and patched clothing which he had once worn in the service of his country, hauled logs, planted corn, and cradled wheat, and in the evenings sat by the fire

and told his children stories, or read to his wife, or played checkers with a neighbour. His face was impassive, his bearded mouth told little of what passed in his mind. But, while his shoulders bent with work, he watched and waited, believing the time would come when he might be needed. And, when it still did not come, and rheumatism and chills took hold of him, he laid aside the axe and placed his few belongings in a wagon, and one day in the autumn of 1859 drove to the north to begin again the fight for a living.

He was thirty-five years old. He had education, energy, ambition. It did not seem to him that his usefulness could be ended. With a hopeful friend he started in to try to do something of which he knew almost nothing.

David, in a letter from Lee, read that the Captain was gone to St. Louis, and was in the real estate business.

He laid the letter down with a sense of personal injury. It was an ideal gone. He had always thought that the Captain was to blaze a path from that log house straight to success. Now he seemed to have yielded the fight. He did not write this to Lee, but she read between the lines of his next letter. It was a faculty of hers. Letters sometimes told her things which were not intended. It may have been they did not tell her always what she wished. Her own letters were a mystery to

her. Days passed while some of them awaited posting. And sometimes they were in plain sight all the while.

Kitty Marshall, coming in of an afternoon, spied such a letter, and pounced on it. "To David!" she cried. "Let me read it?"

Lee reached out her arm, then dropped it with a laugh. "Some other time," she said. "I'm all ready to ride. Come on." She moved toward the door.

But Kitty was tying her hat by the glass above the bureau. Her eyes were on the letter. "Oh, wait till I read it. I'm just dying to. *Please* let me."

"It is — that is, I think it is sealed," Lee said. She hoped it was. She knew there was an unwelcome spot of colour in her cheeks.

Kitty raised the envelope and showed the open flap. "See," she said. "It isn't sealed. May I? You don't mind, do you?"

"I would rather you did not." So quietly was it spoken that a pair of black eyes flashed on her with awakened suspicion. Their owner laughed. "What fun!" she said. "Why didn't you give me a hint before? David —? Oh!" The "Oh" was a note of fine anticipation.

It made Lee stiffen. "Are you coming?"

"Of course. But really, it isn't fair to me. I have known him as long as you have."

Lee stood a moment motionless. She was not looking at Kitty. Neither was she looking at the letter. Her teeth had caught her under-lip, and her head was held far back. "What do you mean?" she asked.

Kitty had heard her speak that way before. She knew what it meant. But the game was tempting. She was a little aggrieved at her treatment. "Oh, nothing," she returned, loftily. "I reckon I was stupid to ask such a question. I didn't know you wanted to hide anything — from *me*."

"Kitty," Lee began. Then she saw her mistake, and moved to the bureau. She stood there, straight and tall. She was pale and very calm. "If you must read my letter, you have my permission," she said. "I am not hiding anything — even from you." Her eyes were challenging. Kitty's temper got the best of her. "Oh, aren't you?" she laughed. It was a light, doubtful laugh.

Lee snatched the letter. "Read it!" she cried, holding it out. "Read it!"

The fingers at the hat-strings twitched. The prize was within their grasp. But the black eyes looked at the letter as if it had been some curio. "Of course, I shall do no such thing," she returned, dropping each word slowly.

"You shall! You shall read it! I wish you to read it."

Again came the taunting laugh. Kitty bent and

her skirts swept the floor. "No," she said. "I would like to oblige you, Miss Shirley, but there is — David. He must be considered. And I had better go. Good-bye."

She turned and went toward the door. Lee remained, the hand holding the letter outstretched. She could not find the word to say. So she saw her visitor pass through the doorway with head airily held, her skirts caught up jauntily. Triumph was in every line of the trim figure from the nodding hat to the clicking heels.

Lee's breast was heaving. When she heard the clash of pebbles on the driveway beneath her window, she weighed the letter in her hand. Then she caught sight of herself in the mirror. Her cheeks flooded, her eyelashes fell. She opened the envelope, looked at the letter a moment, then deliberately tore the eight pages of paper across again and again.

If David had seen this, he would have been puzzled. Perhaps he would have been chagrined. If he had matched those torn pieces of paper he would have been still more astonished. Letters are curious things; yet what was there hidden in these lines of neighbourhood news and friendly questions?

Once he had written of a certain letter of hers, "It was bully. It had so much in it about the people we know. I sat and smoked, and saw them all. Write me some more like that, won't you?"

So she had written. After a time he noticed that some of these letters were very brief. But they were what he asked for, and he was satisfied — with all but one.

In that she talked of a party at Kitty Marshall's house. There was something, too, about Oswald's slavish attendance on his hostess, a dozen lines of mystery about the dress the writer wore. Toward the end a reference slipped in to a stranger, a Mississippi man, a friend of Nina Rennert's. He had chestnut hair that curled, and was awfully good-looking, and was very, very — foolish. Had he not chosen to be a spectator whenever he was not dancing with her? A thing unheard of, was it not?

David agreed. Then he read the passage again. Afterward, he laid the letter in his lap and began to smoke.

He woke to his surroundings to find himself staring at the little air-tight stove in the far corner of his room. He did not understand. But he forgot all about it until he wrote her. Then he chanced to ask the name of the foolish man. In her reply she did not remember to answer, but she did recall a detail or two of what happened on that memorable night.

David did not repeat his inquiry.

When he came home it was to find few changes. In his uncle's house there was now and then a visitor whom he had not seen before, a man from

New Orleans, — a cotton-grower, he was told: once or twice Tom White, slouching, but less loquacious. These visits, it seemed, had to do with the investment which Mr. Mayhew had made in cotton in Mississippi. He vouchsafed that he expected great things of it.

David gave it no thought. His uncle and he grew further apart each day. He felt more ill at ease and restless. He missed the Captain's grave face. And there were things of which he would never have spoken to Lee had she not guessed at them. Even when she did, he found himself at a loss to explain.

"What is it?" she asked one day.

He had fallen to staring at the ground as they walked together. He started at the question. But he answered, openly, "I don't know. You'll have to forgive me. It was stupid."

"No," she said, "it wasn't. Tell me what it is."

"I wish I could. But I can't exactly. I reckon I have changed some. I must wake up. Perhaps it is because things are somehow different here from the way they are where I've been."

"And not just what you care for any more?" She lingered wistfully on the last word. It did not escape him. He shook himself.

"No, no," he protested, loyally. "Of course, it isn't that. You know it isn't. It's — well — oh, I don't know what. Let's talk of something more cheerful." She looked at him curiously, but she made

no reply. "Now, there *you* are," he went on, gaily. "Do you know, you took my breath away when I first saw you — this time."

"No," she answered. "Truly? How dreadful! Do I look so dangerous? 'What sharp teeth you have, grandmother! And how long your claws are!' Never mind, I will spare you."

"Oh, I am safe," he returned. "We are old friends. But there are other people, and you *are* dangerous, Lee. Don't you know it?"

"You are the first one to say so," she declared. But her eyes were lowered. Suddenly he was more sure of the truth of his warning. How straight and tall she was! And the gracious promise of her figure! The poke-bonnet hid her face now. He wished he might see under its tilt. But she was lifting the hem of her gown, and refused him the glimpse. Then, just as he was forgetting his wish, she spoke. "David, my shoe is untied." He bent down quickly, and the slender arch of instep which slipped out and waited his ministrations gave him a queer start. He bungled the tying badly. When he looked up, the gray eyes sparkled mischievously in the shadow of the bonnet. "I reckon, David, at college you had not much practice in waiting on ladies," she said, sorrowfully.

He surprised himself. "It wouldn't have helped me just now if I had had," he answered.

She held up a rebuking finger. "Why! That is flattery. I must be careful."

He rose without replying. Though she stole a glance at him twice, he did not look at her.

But there are some pictures we never forget. For David, one of these was Lee in her white gown, the skirt billowing from her slender waist, the sleeves slipped back from the softly rounded arms, a loose curl escaping from the poke-bonnet to blow across her eyes and help to hide her face from him.

The Captain asked after her almost as soon as David found him in St. Louis. It was easy to find the Captain's place of business. There were few people in the neighbourhood of Pine Street who did not know him by sight. The brick house had a sign over the door, and two windows on the pavement. The Captain was at his desk, close to one of these, his pipe in his mouth, when David came in. He sprang up and gave him his hand. "You see, I'm the lookout," he said. "Hillyer's away. Trying to collect a rent I made a bungle of. We can't afford to let any customers go by. Here I can reach through the window and hold on to them till somebody gets outside." David joined in the laugh, but perceived a good deal of bitter fact behind the joke. The two rooms had a bare, unprofitable look.

The Captain was like the rooms. His shoulders stooped, his figure slouched when he did not re-

member to stiffen it. To his visitor he seemed a trifle heavier than when he saw him last. But the old vigour and elasticity were missing. The familiar habit of dropping his head slightly to one side now hinted of weariness. His beard was closely trimmed and his hair brushed back and parted so that it rolled thickly, and exposed the lines in his face and brought out the soberness which was almost dejection in his eyes and mouth.

David went home to supper with him, but all the while was thinking of the days on the Gravois; of the building of the log house; of the Captain sturdily walking by his wagon, the tails of the long blue overcoat flapping about his boot-tops. This hardly seemed to be the same man.

The Captain's house was near the river, and the neighbours were not prepossessing. But the welcome was warm, and there was plenty of supper, if it was plain. Afterward, they sat on the door-step. The Captain smoked a cigar. He pulled on it with relish, gripping it firmly with his teeth. Then he made his first remark about the house. "Not quite as much room as out Gravois way. I want more. We're going to have it. I shall rent Hardscrabble, and move, in a couple of weeks. We'll do well — Hillyer and I — in time, I reckon." It was the courage and faith of the old days, but it was only a flash. He spoke little of what he had been doing.

He talked of politics guardedly, but it was plain that he was beginning to look on Mr. Douglas as the man of the hour. David went away with pity in his heart.

Something of this was in his voice when he spoke of the Captain to Doctor Shirley one evening a couple of months later. He was waiting for Lee, who was going with him to Kitty Marshall's. They were in the library. The Doctor, though it was a mild night, had a blaze in the fireplace, and sat beside it with feet outstretched. He looked older. His thin face above the flaring collar and broad tie seemed almost pinched, and there were hollows beneath his eyes.

But his voice was clear. "Yes," he said, "the Captain is having his hard times. You know he failed to get the county engineer's office?"

David leaned forward quickly. "I did not even know he had applied for it. He is in the real estate business."

"Yes, but I believe he will soon withdraw from that. It has not been a success. There was to be a vacancy in the county engineer's office this month. He applied for it. I was glad to indorse his application. But somehow — the place went to another man. I tell you that was wrong. The Captain should have had it."

But if David had not known of this, Mr. Mayhew

was better informed. He alluded to it a few days later. "He seems to be always doing the wrong thing," he added.

David sprang to the Captain's defence. Mr. Mayhew smiled at his heat. "Perhaps," he said, "perhaps he has only to find his groove. But he's a long time finding it. He has not been wise, either. He kept up his visits to the office of the *Democrat* until he lost a good many dollars. He acted foolishly about his niggers, too. When he left here, he sold all of them except that big red-headed fellow, — Sandy. He offered to give him away. Nobody he went to wanted him. I heard he said he wouldn't sell him because the man wasn't worth anything to anybody unless the whip was used on him, and he wouldn't have that."

David recalled what they used to say about the Captain's incapacity to handle slaves. His leniency wore another coat now. Again he realised how, unconsciously, his point of view had shifted, but a lingering uncertainty restrained him from saying what he thought.

Mr. Mayhew went on with half-closed eyes, "His scruples didn't hold out, though. He sold Sandy — quickly enough, at last. He sold him to me. I suppose it was because he knew I never use the whip," he reflected. His eyelids quivered slightly. The shadow of a smile was on his lips. "It was

fortunate for the Captain," he finished; "he was able to stick to his principles, you see — after a fashion — and turn an honest penny, too."

"He probably needed the money," David suggested.

"He probably did. And I wanted Sandy. I have use for him. He is tractable enough with me." Then Mr. Mayhew began to talk of his cotton-trading. This was demanding much attention. He spoke of the correspondence it entailed. "I hope you will take an interest in it, David, later on. You must be my legs — when you leave college. This business calls for quickness and discretion. It is growing. Cotton may be worth a great deal some day."

David agreed mechanically. The prospect did not please him. He had no liking for trading of any kind. But he did not say so. There was time enough for that. He had not yet made up his mind where or how to begin work when he left college. But he knew that he would, when the time came. He had a calm confidence which was almost a philosophy. So he sat listening, now and then making a reply, and presently found that it was after all the question of abolition of which Mr. Mayhew was talking.

Thinking it over afterward, he was surprised at some things he had said. Did he really believe that

abolition had a chance to win? And had he made that statement about State rights? When he picked up the conversation piece by piece, he realised that a good many opinions had been drawn out of him which hitherto he had kept to himself.

VI

About a Story-Teller

THERE was a girl in the South. David learned that a few evenings after his return to college. Boone had met her at a house-party outside of Baltimore that summer. He did not tell her name. In fact, his mention of her slipped out almost unconsciously. But his dark eyes glowed, and he said a few words that left no doubt as to his feelings. David reached over and gripped his hand. "Now, you must have that sheepskin," he said.

"I want to hang out my shingle in Galena this summer," Boone answered.

"But there'll be a 'Mrs. Doctor'?"

"Well, hardly yet. You see," he went on, a little awkwardly, "it isn't just settled. By the way, I would rather you didn't say anything about it. The fact is — well, she doesn't know what my plans are, though I shouldn't wonder if she had some notion of them." He laughed.

After that, the girl from the South figured in

a good many conversations which started on foreign subjects. But her name was not disclosed. Boone was reticent about some things. For all the honesty and confidence in others which exactly fitted his big frame and strong open face, he said little about his people or the place he came from. Once he had shown a miniature in a worn locket of gold. It was the face of a dark-eyed, dark-haired woman, in whose features was to be recognised a likeness. But Boone simply said, "My mother," very tenderly, "she died when I was born," and closed the locket and put it away.

David knew that Boone's father was an Illinois man who had made and lost a small fortune in lead mining, and was not always in sympathy with his son. Boone was putting himself through college largely by outside work.

He liked him better with every day. The room would seem very empty when the big fellow was not there of evenings to fill the rocker by the fire, with a long leg hanging over an arm of the chair, and his pipe puffing clouds of smoke. They had fought out a good many battles together. But they were better friends with every contest.

For one thing, they had never been able to agree on politics. Boone was a straight-out abolitionist. He execrated the Democratic party, he had little patience with Mr. Douglas, though admitting his eloquence. During that last year at college, David

tackled him again and again, but he budged not an inch. He returned the fire with a vigour and directness which often, after he had banged the door and stamped off, left behind him a cloud of smoke and a thicker cloud of doubt.

So the winter went by, and Boone, the coveted parchment in his pocket, left for home in the spring. David came back to college to find awaiting him a letter from the Springs mentioning that the Mississippi man of earlier acquaintance was there. His stay was indefinite. The writer drew a picture of him. David studied it carefully. He decided that it lacked detail.

Then, his serious attention struck him comically, and he managed a smile whenever recollection of it thrust itself upon him that winter.

But there was something else over which he knit his brows. It was the spring of 1860, and with every day he realised more keenly how strong a hold the Great Question had taken on him. He knew what he wished to believe, but something stubbornly resisted this inclination. Always a fight was going on between his ideals and his inquisitive brain which prodded him, appealing to his common sense.

Douglas was the hero of his affections. Burning phrases recurred to him — phrases of adjuration, command, prophecy. Their swelling intonation reechoed and charmed his senses. It fired his enthusiasm. But ever another voice followed, — a calm,

clear voice, one he had never heard, but which he felt he would know instantly by the words which it had spoken.

These words knit themselves into vigorous, honest statements. Many of them occurred in stories. Some of the stories made him smile. Some touched his heart. If they did not tickle the ear, they stuck in the mind. He turned them over many times, and with each turning they sank deeper. Some of them he had read in the newspapers. Some of them had been repeated to him. They were spoken by a man named Lincoln, the man who had run against Douglas for United States Senator.

He recalled a story which this Lincoln had told. It brought in the name of Douglas. He laughed as it repeated itself to him.

Some one from the crowd below the little table where Lincoln stood had said he had always voted the Democratic ticket, and would go on doing it. Once you were sure of your mind, you ought to go straight ahead behind one leader.

"That reminds me," said Lincoln, "of a little thing that happened back in Illinois. There was a boy ploughing new land on the prairie, and he asked his father to tell him which way he was to strike the first furrow. 'Oh,' said the father, 'you see that yoke of oxen standing over there at the far end of the field? You steer for them.' 'All right,' says the boy, 'I will.' Then the father went away,

and the boy started in. He kept his eyes open and steered for the oxen. He never swerved once. But, by and by, it seemed to him that it was a thundering long way to those oxen, and he was just going to stop when he saw that he was coming up with them. When he got close to them, he stopped. And then he began to notice things. He looked back and he saw that the furrow he'd been ploughing wasn't straight at all. It wobbled every which way, and it didn't seem to lead anywhere. Then it struck him that things looked mighty familiar somehow. But he didn't let this worry him a bit. No, sir. He'd done what he'd said he'd do, — steered for the oxen. He'd done it, and he hadn't swerved once. It wasn't his lookout that the oxen had been walking round the field all the time, and come back right to where they started from."

David wished he might hear Lincoln tell that story. Perhaps it would be spoiled in the telling. Then it wouldn't come back to bother him.

Some day he intended to ask the Captain about the man who told it.

But in April, in a letter from Mr. Mayhew, was the news that the Captain had left St. Louis. He had obtained a small place in the St. Louis custom-house, and lost it in a month. Then he walked the streets and asked for work of any kind, and nobody wanted him. The month previous he had made another application for a position in the county

engineer's office. It came to nothing. After that, so Mr. Mayhew had heard, he applied to his father, and was told he could go to Galena and see what he could do in the leather store there. "The chance was given him out of pity, I suppose," the writer added. "It is the last probably we will hear of him. Yet we must not despise him, David. The world is always hard on failures. The more I read my Bible the more it is borne in on me that charity is the greatest virtue. The humblest may rise again. Remember, Simon was the son of a tanner!"

A subtle repugnance made David tear the letter into pieces. But its closing words he could not forget.

The story of the Captain's arrival at Galena was commonplace enough. Boone told about it a few weeks later when he met David in St. Louis.

"I was on the wharf when the Captain came in," he said. "The Captain wore that same old coat. There were a lot of bags and bundles about him. He came ashore with his hands full. His wife and four children were with him. He didn't look well. He walked firmly enough, but his shoulders are stooping. He looked like a common soldier who had seen a lot of hard service in a bad climate. He didn't seem to know anybody in particular. There was a crowd on the wharf. I soon lost sight of him. I don't know just where he's living, but I am going

to make his acquaintance by and by, if he'll let me. Maybe he wants — a family physician."

He looked more gaunt than ever. His eyes were deep in the sockets. The angles of his jaw and the cheek-bones were prominent. But he laughed at the warning that he was working too hard, and his dark eyes were brilliant. "Not hard enough, you mean," he returned. "They won't let me. At least, they don't give me the work to do — except hospital cases. My 'private' practice is extensive, but I am like the country editor. Pay comes in everything but what my creditors want. The other day I spent the night working over a woman. Her husband was a splendid fellow. He very nearly shook my arm off when I left. And he gave me this bank-note. It's from a State bank, you see. So far I've had one offer for it. It was a trade, and came from another of my 'private' patients. He is collecting notes issued by the State banks which nobody will redeem. He said he had duplicates of one of them, and would exchange with me."

He laughed at the recollection. "The only thing for me to do is to make it the nucleus for a bank-note museum, I reckon," he finished.

The philosophy was contagious. David laughed at him. "But you don't mean to say you have many cases as bad as that?"

Boone waved the stem of his pipe in the air. "My son," he said, "that is an unusually prom-

ising case. I pocketed the fee and thanked the donor. I will probably continue to be family physician for that household. And some day he will make the mistake of giving me a bank-note worth nearly its face value." His eyes twinkled. Then, with immense satisfaction, "I saved the woman, remember."

David, looking at him as he sat nursing the pipe on one knee in his strong, thin hands, said nothing; but he felt his heart go out to this big fellow. There was that in the rugged face which reminded him of the Captain. It was the stamp of honesty and will-power, he decided. And something else — the lines made by hard work and — yes — disappointment. Into his head flashed "the girl from the South."

But he asked no question about her then, and Boone said nothing. Before he left the following day, however, he understood that there had been a visit to the girl's home, and that something had happened. He never learned what this was, and for many months neither he nor Boone alluded to it.

Those were the months in which the great fight for the Presidency came to a head. Breckenridge had been nominated, Bell had been nominated, Douglas had been nominated — Abraham Lincoln had been nominated. The two great parties — the North and the South, it was now — were closing up their lines. Bigger on the horizon each day loomed a

tall, lank man: a man who told stories which made people laugh or rub their eyes; who seemed never weary, though working night and day: a man who heard more clearly than any other the threat that swelled louder and louder from the South, and who knew that death would ambush every step he took toward the place for which he had offered himself; yet whose earnest, kindly eyes never wavered.

What was it which drew David toward that homely figure? A thousand times he asked himself this, and often rebelled against the influence. But always it drew him closer. Then in one hour he knew. It was Truth, — the truth of honesty and right.

But before this Lee came home, and he discovered for himself that, if he had ever known her, he had now many things to learn. She was infinitely far from him at times, and yet tantalisingly near. One morning in September arrived a note from her.

"DEAR DAVID: — I shall ride this afternoon at three o'clock. Dick needs exercise. You can come along if you wish to very much.

"LEE."

"I am going to St. Louis this afternoon," said David to himself. "I will ride around and tell her so." But at half-past two o'clock, in the riding-clothes he had brought from the East, he came out

upon the Gravois road, a straight, strong figure in the saddle, and he promptly turned his back on St. Louis. It must have been self-denial which put him in excellent spirits.

He swung along at an easy pace, and turned between the gateposts at Doctor Shirley's place with a welcome on his clean-shaven face for the big house which stood on a gentle rise in a circle of locust-trees at the end of the elm-shaded drive. There was dignity and an ample hospitality in its porch and gallery, its wide-open doors, and its walls cooled by the vines which clambered into the laps of the windows and wreathed the chimneys to their tops. Back of it was the whitewashed kitchen with flaking walls. Beyond this, where the ground fell away in rolling reaches toward the east, were the cabins of the quarter; at one side, among gnarled orchard-trees, the spring-house, shoulder-high above the grass. Further east the meadows began, now bathed in the blue mist and yellow sunshine of an autumn afternoon. The peace of it entered into David's soul. There had never been another place like this to him, there never would be. Here was his home. And this was the South in all its habits at least. A bitter distrust of those who would break in upon this peace welled in his heart. What right had they?

He pulled up his horse at the mounting-block. There was no one in sight. He waited a little while,

then whistled; but drew only an echo. Again he whistled without an answer. Then he smiled at the open doors, and rode slowly down to the gate. He was aware that a departing back often wrought wonders.

Yet he came to the end of the drive, listening over his shoulder in vain. So he turned back toward the house. His horse threw up its head and strained at the bridle. But he was at the mounting-block once more, and a line was drawn between his eyes when, from the dimness of the hall, came a little cry, "Oh, so you are there at last!" And on to the porch, in all the trim propriety of riding-habit, stepped the figure which his eyes had been seeking for the quarter-hour past.

Holding her fine shoulders so proudly that she seemed a head above her stature, her eyes shaded by a wide hat, against which the curling brown hair was in rebellion, her skirt caught up in a slender hand so that David perceived that these were new boots, she came to the porch's edge.

"Well," she asked, "what have you to say?"

"To say?" he answered. "Me? You ought to be the one to say something. You told me to be here —"

"At three o'clock. It is now quarter past."

"Well?"

The gray eyes were stern, the mouth commanding. He should have been impressed. But he felt

neither contrition nor fear. In fact, he was enjoying the poise of her head. Her low-spoken "I am waiting, David," made him start.

"Oh, very well," he said, laughing. He slid from his horse, and extended a hand. "Of course it was you who were waiting," he conceded.

"I was, but not to ride with you," she retorted. "That is, not until you tell why you were late."

"I wasn't late," he returned, a little nettled. "I have been here fifteen minutes and more. I whistled — "

"Now, David."

"I did — half a dozen times."

"Think again. Wasn't it only twice?"

His lips straightened. "So you *did* hear me. Why didn't you answer?"

"It isn't exactly polite for ladies to whistle, is it?" she queried. "Besides, how could I tell who it was. Lots of people know how to whistle."

His hand dropped. He regarded her with grave eyes.

"Don't they, David?" she asked. "Don't lots of people know how to whistle?"

Suddenly the steady gaze baffled her. Her lashes were lowered. "Anyway," she said, softly, "I might have thought it was a bird. It was so sweet, David."

He tried to hold his sternness. It escaped him, and she knew it.

"If you are going to amuse yourself with me all afternoon," he said, "perhaps you will let me come up on the porch."

She looked up. "Oh, no," she answered, "I am going riding. I told you I was waiting. How tired poor Dick must be. Will you get him for me?"

He turned and walked along the drive toward the stable. She tossed a hand to him. But her eyes followed him until he had turned a corner. When he was back again she put a foot on his hand and her fingers touched his shoulder. She was in the saddle and moving away with a warning, "Don't take root, David!" before he had picked up the riding-switch which she dropped at his feet. She waved to him from between the gateposts as he reached the saddle and spoke to his horse. But the sorrel mare he rode had the heels of Dick, and half a mile away she slackened speed as he ranged up beside her.

"I told you Dick needed exercise," she remarked, "but I don't care to have him run off his legs. Let's walk for awhile."

It had rained the night before. Every leaf was clean washed, the uncut corn made a hedge of rusty gold and green upon the right, a stubble of wheat spread itself down the slope, toward the gullied bank of the Gravois. A film of smoke ahead

told of the river beyond ceaselessly rolling its yellow breast to the south.

David's eyes noted the smoke. His mind filled in the picture of the swift craft below, loaded to her guards with the cargo which she was carrying to the wharves above with their crowding warehouses and all the dirt and noise of the city river front. But it drew him. That was the place for which he had been making ready. Life was earnest. He wanted to begin work. He would never be content with less than the most that could be won.

An aggrieved voice told him that he had been silent a long time. "I'm still here, David." Then, as he turned his face and she saw its earnestness, "What were you thinking about?"

"About what's up there — in the city, for me," he said. "I want to start this autumn. I would like to have a place in the county engineer's office. I'm fitted for it." Some recollection of the Captain's failure in that same direction quenched the sparkle in his eyes. "But it's not easy to secure. There are a good many applicants, and politics — "

"Politics! Is that it? Then you ought to speak to Colonel Marshall. He has a great deal of influence."

"No, I won't do that."

"You won't? You must. He will be mighty glad to do anything for you."

"He might, but I'm not sure. Anyhow, I would rather not ask him."

"What nonsense! He's known you all your life. Why is it you don't want to ask him?"

"Because," said David, "I'm going to do something in a few weeks which the Colonel will never forgive. I am going to vote for a Black Republican, — the blackest of them all, I reckon, according to his way of thinking, — Abraham Lincoln."

Dick did not understand the sudden jerk on the reins. But he came to a standstill instantly, and Lee, leaning a little forward, repeated, "Abraham Lincoln! The countryman! Do you mean it?"

"Yes," he replied, steadily. "I am going to vote for Lincoln for President."

"You are? Why? Why not Mr. Douglas?"

"Because Mr. Douglas is wrong, and I believe in Mr. Lincoln."

"Believe in him! Why, they say he is a gawky backwoods lawyer."

David, with knit brows, looking straight ahead of him, made no reply at first. Then, abruptly fixing his eyes on her, asked, "Lee, do you believe in slavery?"

"We have always had slaves. Why shouldn't I believe in it?"

"But you don't. You don't. Your father doesn't, I feel sure. And Mr. Lincoln —"

"Mr. Lincoln means to try to take them away from us?" she finished for him. "Is that right?"

"Mr. Lincoln does not mean to do that. He means to try to hold this country together. That's why I shall vote for him."

"I never thought you would be against us," she said, sadly.

"Against us!" It was the first time it had presented itself that way. Mr. Lincoln had said, "A house divided against itself shall not stand." This was what it meant. David had wrestled with old ideals and abandoned them to learn what? For an instant he almost repented. But he knew that, say what he might, his heart would speak with the same voice. He looked across at the sweet figure which had swayed a little toward him. The gray eyes seemed to beseech, the lips trembled. "Lee," he said, "you know nothing would ever make me against you. But I must vote for Mr. Lincoln. I have thought it all out."

Did her figure draw from him, as she answered, "Very well, you must do your own way?" She lifted the reins and her horse started forward. There was a mile of that road over which David never passed afterward but recollection pictured a silent figure riding beside him, and his brooding returned to him.

She surprised him when she spoke again. "David, I have a promise to keep this afternoon."

There was a smile on her lips, and he answered, gaily, "If it's a promise to me, I won't let you off."

"But it's not to you. It's to another man, — one I want you to meet."

"All right. But I don't see how we can meet. Here on the road?"

She laughed. "None the less it is to be here on the road. The man is Philip Randolph. He's a sort of distant cousin of mine. Don't you remember 'the man from Mississippi'?"

It was on his tongue to say, "The foolish man!" How plainly he did remember! It was that, perhaps, which sobered him and made him answer, "Yes, I remember. Where is he?"

"He came up from Vicksburg yesterday. He has to go back to St. Louis to-night. So he sent a message that he would ride out along this road this afternoon; and I want you to meet him."

"That's why you sent me that note?"

She nodded.

"But why didn't you say he was coming? I don't understand."

"David," she replied. "David, haven't you learned that there are a good many things you don't understand, and that I haven't reasons for everything I do?"

"Yes," he said. "Frankly, I have, but — Oh, I shall like the Mississippi man if you do." If a

reservation suggested itself, he did not acknowledge it even to himself.

At the next turn they came upon Randolph suddenly. He was lithe and slender. He sat his horse with careless ease, and as he pulled off his hat and rode up with extended hand, David decided that these facts were plain: He was a gentleman, and he was all in looks that Lee had written. His eyes were sparkling. In riding clothes, the coat open over a shirt with flowing collar and tie, his slender, straight figure suggested the cavalier in every line.

"Oh, Miss Shirley," he cried, the Southern drawl without suspicion of laziness, "you don't know how mighty glad I am to see you. I was reckoning I was going to have to turn back without seeing you."

"Now, were you?" Lee mimicked his tone of injury and regarded him with wicked eyes. "Wouldn't that have been sad?"

"It surely would," he protested. Then he looked at David. "Mr. Philip Randolph — of Mississippi," she said, and David did not miss the emphasis.

"You look about the way I reckoned you did," Philip vouchsafed. "I hope some day somebody will give me as good a character as Miss Shirley gave you." It was spoken frankly.

As they rode on it was Lee and the visitor who did the talking. David, studying the eager face

under the wide-brimmed hat, was unconscious of his scrutiny until she appealed to him.

Then he shook off his fancies and did his part. But the pleasure of the ride had diminished. He was restless, and impressed with the idea that a gallop ahead was what he needed. A minute later he proposed it.

"Just what I would like," Lee agreed. "Dick wants it, too." She looked over at Philip. But he was enjoying this loafing along "mighty much," he declared. David's suggestion became a resolve. "I'll be waiting for you a mile on," he said, and raced ahead. He was sure it was what he needed when she did not try to dissuade him. But how is it that the right way so often is rough travelling?

VII

Crossing a Bridge

IN October Lee went to New Orleans in Nina Rennert's company. She was to spend November at Vicksburg with her cousins, the Pembertons. David rode over to say good-bye the evening before she left.

He came from a meeting where he had heard Lincoln's name cheered and hissed. He had seen one rush from the outskirts of the crowd that ended in a fight. He had heard Oswald speak, and his was the "Black Republican" speech which brought on the fight. He had helped to drive back those who tried to break up the meeting. With these sounds ringing in his head, and the shoving bodies and close-pressed, excited faces still clear in his vision, he wondered at himself. It must have been some one else who, a year ago, had doubted what his decision should be.

When he came into the library at Doctor Shirley's and found Lee alone, he was sure she would read

his thoughts. But she held out her hand and told him to bring over the big chair beside the fire. She began to talk of his plans for beginning work that winter. How womanly and serious she had grown! He was very proud of her friendship. He would miss her this time as he had never done before. But he did not tell her so, though once he began to speak of it and stopped because what he said made her look at him so curiously.

He had risen to go when she asked him, "David, once you said you would vote for Mr. Lincoln?"

"Yes, I will vote for him."

"You really mean it?"

"Of course." He leaned his elbows on the back of the chair and looked down on her, wagging his head in mockery of her incredulity. "I mean it."

"I do not understand," she said. "How can you do it?"

"Because I believe Mr. Lincoln is right," he answered, all at once earnest.

"Right?" she echoed. "Right to try to take away from us what belongs to us, what we have always had? Is that right?"

"Lee," said David, quietly, as he had once before, "you don't believe in slavery yourself. Do you? Does the Doctor?"

And this time she attempted no equivocation. "It isn't that," she returned. "If it was only a question of our giving up the few people we

have, I would not care. Sometimes I think father would do that now for the sake of peace. But it is more. It is saying we must. It is the North telling the South what it shall not do."

"You are wrong. With Mr. Lincoln there is no North and no South. There is only his country."

"His country!" she repeated, scornfully. "And that is why he is putting our friends against us? Oh, why does he do it? We have always lived our own way. We have been happy. Why can't we be left alone?"

"Because slavery can't go any further if we are to have the Union."

"The Union!" she exclaimed. "How sick I am of the word!"

His head went back. "You don't mean that!"

"I do!" she cried. "I am sick of it! The Union is the North, and the North is not yours, David, and it is not mine. It never will be. The North is different, so different. It does not understand us. I have been North. I know. And you know, too."

He did know. Twist it as he might, the South was the South, and the North — what was the North? He respected it, he wondered at it. He was learning to know it better. But it was not in his heart. He was silent.

"And the South will never yield," she went on, rapidly. "It will go out first. And then what will the

North do? What will you do?" He did not reply. She said again, "What will you do, David?"

"I have not gone that far yet," he answered, slowly. "I do not want to."

"Then you have no right to help the North." Her face was lifted to his. She threw out an arm with closed hand. "You have no right to help them," she repeated; "for you belong to us." The clenched fingers unclosed — and there was a pleading palm. "So you won't vote for Mr. Lincoln," she said, softly. "You won't? I ask you not to."

David took the hand held out to him. "You know I wouldn't, if I could do anything else," he said.

"But I ask you?" she repeated. "It means a great deal to me what — you do." The last words were very faint; her eyes were hidden. And he fought with a tenderness that made him tremble. But those days and nights of battle with himself had made him sure. He tried to tell her how it was.

"But *me?*" she reminded him. The fingers clung to his. "Doesn't it make any difference about me? I thought — "

"You know it makes a difference. I would do anything for you that I could."

"Then do this." The lashes lifted for an instant.

"But this — this time — " he began.

"This time?" she said. There was a little pause.

Then the hand slipped from his grasp. She had looked into his face and seen. "This time it doesn't count," she went on. "That is it. It was easy enough before. Now, because you have made up your mind — I might have known it. I might have known it. But I kept on hoping."

He was learning then the lesson which every man must learn. There is no enemy, no friend, like one's own heart. But he was true to it, — true to it though his words were the hardest he ever spoke. "I can't do it, Lee. I can't. Forgive me."

She did not speak then; she knew that this was what he would say. But when he leaned forward, and said again, "Forgive me!" she was not deceived by that swift response. "Forgive you? I have nothing to forgive. I only made — a mistake."

Then he tried to speak of it again, and she frowned. "No, don't speak of it any more. We have said everything. I want to forget it!"

Forget it! He knew he would not do that. When she said good night and he walked from the room and looked back from the doorway to see her face turned away, he knew that she would not forget, and that something very dear seemed slipping from him.

But he did not know that as the door closed on him, she sprang to her feet and made a quick step toward the window, then slowly turned again,

and, in the chair by the fire, dropped her hands in her lap. If he had known that, would he have come back? Not to unsay his words, it is certain.

When the Doctor came in and spoke to her she lifted such a strange face to his, that he asked her what was wrong.

"Nothing," she answered. "Except the things which are right." Which was stranger still, though it only brought a perplexed wrinkle to the Doctor's face. He held out his hands for her. She flung her arms about his neck, and hugged him tightly. "Good night," she said. "Good night." Then with her head on his breast, she asked him, "Father, have you ever heard Mr. Lincoln speak?"

"No, but I've read some of his speeches," he said. "If it wasn't for Mr. Douglas, I believe I would vote for him."

"I wouldn't," she declared, vehemently. "No, I never would — not if there was never to be a President. But" — her voice was sad — "but it's no use, father. Mr. Lincoln will be elected."

Before he could speak she had kissed him twice again and slipped from the room.

The Doctor wondered and intended to ask her what she meant. But he never did. Neither did he repeat her prophecy to David. Like many other things, he never thought of it again. So David missed what perhaps was a message, a message which might have made easier the weeks in which there

came no letter from her, and the letter which he tried to write remained unwritten. It might have been, too, that it would have given a keener edge to his satisfaction on the November day when he knew that the tall, awkward man in black for whom he had voted was elected President of the United States.

His uncle brought the news. "But I am very much afraid he will not be President long," he added. "You would not take my advice, David. You voted for him. You will see you have done wrong."

Kitty Marshall, with sparkling eyes, told David of the scene when the Colonel came home from St. Louis the day of the election. He had refused to the last moment to accept the result. "I was with Aunt Sarah when he came in," she said. "He never spoke a word; and Aunt Sarah stood it as long as she could. Then she said, 'Well, I suppose *some one* was elected.' You ought to have seen the Colonel's face." Kitty whistled. "He was the colour of whitewash. 'I have not learned yet,' he said" — Kitty put her hands behind her back and struck an attitude — "'I have not learned yet that any one was made President. They say that they will put a man over us named Lincoln. Let them try. This is the last insult to be borne. The last insult. It will be war! War inside of six months! And you, you must not forget, madam, are one of those who have brought it on. I hope you will be as ready for it as I am.' Then he rushed out of the room," Kitty

explained. "And Aunt Sarah, — well, she just sat there."

She paused, and added, "David, I reckon something must have happened to Aunt Sarah right then. For she didn't answer back a word."

Boone came to St. Louis on an errand for a hospital a few weeks later. Of course the talk was immediately of the election. He was in the full flood of exultation. "The country has spoken to the point," he declared. "What more do they want? The Democrats! Where are they? They met in June. Then they broke. The seceders held a convention for themselves, and they didn't agree any too well. Between Baltimore and Richmond they made a nice mess of it. We have them on the hip."

"But they are ugly and determined," said David, slowly. "And General Scott has advised the President to double all garrisons at United States forts. That doesn't look as if it were settled."

Boone laughed grimly. "Maybe not. But if it comes to anything like that, we won't be stopped by a weak-kneed politician like Buchanan. If they try to follow the advice of those Charleston traitors and make their 'Southern republic,' we'll —" He checked himself. "I forgot," he said. "You've not quite made up your mind as to the unrighteousness of this. But you will, you will, old fellow,

because you love the old flag." David was staring gloomily at the opposite wall. He made no reply.

"I met the Captain the other day," Boone volunteered, after a minute. "He came into the hall where we Wide Awakes were drilling. He looked on; didn't say a word. Nobody noticed him till Smith, who was drilling us, asked him to put us through a few movements. One or two of the fellows laughed when he came on the floor. He sort of slouched along and looked so rusty. But just then he straightened up, flung back the cape of that old overcoat, and — there wasn't any more loafing; and there wasn't any laughing so far as I heard."

"The Wide Awakes? I thought you wrote he'd been elected captain of that Douglas Club at Galena?"

"He was elected. But he declined the nomination. Said he hadn't been long enough in the State to vote. It was the same answer he gave when Smith asked him what he thought of Douglas. I was standing by. 'He's a very smart man,' he said. 'I heard him at Dubuque the other day. But I don't like his ideas exactly. It don't seem to me as if they'd work. I don't know which way I'd vote if I could. Last time I voted against Fremont.'"

"Yes," confirmed David. "I remember he told me about that. But he's changed his mind since then. I believe he is against secession."

Boone's eyes opened wide. He forgot all about

the Captain. His chin came up with a snap. "Secession! We'll take that notion out of any State in short order," he said, passionately. "If they try it, we'll bring them back before they know they're out."

David did not answer. "You don't think we can do it?" demanded Boone. "Why, what sort of a Lincoln man are you?"

"I don't know just what I think about it." David was studying the wall. "I haven't come up to it yet. I don't mean to till I have to." He raised his face. It was very sober. "Boone," he said, "it seems to me there's a difference between stopping slavery where it is and telling the people of a State they can't vote to do what they want with their State because other States don't agree with them. I've tried to see it the way you do. But I'm not ready yet to go that far."

"You'll have to go a good bit further before long. And when it comes, as I said, you'll be on the right side."

David spoke slowly. "We'll find a way out. There must be one. If there isn't! Do you know what it would mean? It would mean that perhaps you and I would be shooting across a fence at each other."

"When the time comes for shooting," Boone returned, "we'll be on the same side of the fence."

That afternoon they rode out to Gravois. Boone

was to stay overnight. In the evening they called on Kitty Marshall.

David did not explain that it was only the Colonel's absence which made him feel at liberty to visit the house. He took immense satisfaction in noting the first return of the old spirit in Boone. Kitty plainly showed her liking for the new visitor, but for David she reserved pitying allusions to his "loneliness."

Presently she jumped up. "I want to read you a letter — parts of it," she said. "It will interest you, David. It's from *her.*" She gave him a fleeting glance.

He answered promptly. "Is it? I'm mighty glad. Boone has never met her."

She brought the letter under the lamp, and ran her eyes over it, page after page. Then she deliberately refolded it, and laid it in her lap. "On second thoughts, I won't read it," she said. "It wouldn't be exactly fair. There's so much in it about some people Doctor Hadley doesn't know. But she did speak of that Mr. Randolph who was up here while I was away. You met him, didn't you, David?"

"Philip Randolph? Oh, yes. Does he live in Vicksburg? I thought his home was some distance from there."

"So it is, I believe," answered Kitty. "But you see he has some very good friends at Vicksburg."

She paused; and, as if it was an afterthought, "And he is very fond of riding." She raised a hand and put back her hair. Unobserved, she had an excellent glimpse of David. But it did not satisfy her. "He is very good-looking, isn't he?" she asked.

"Yes, he is good-looking," said David. "And, I remember, he did ride well. I expect that's the reason," he added.

Of what this was the reason the tremble of Kitty's lip may have been an indication. But she went on, "What I wanted to tell you, though, was about a girl. Lee says she's a beauty. Maybe she'll come up to visit here later. Every man's in love with her in Vicksburg. I picked you out, Doctor Hadley, to be our champion, as soon as I saw you. You and she would make such a splendid — what shall I say?"

David laughed. "First you'd better tell us what she's like."

"Let me see," she said, reflectively. "She is — oh, I know the very thing. Lee sent her picture."

She slipped a photograph from the envelope in her lap. David declared that it was the picture of a very handsome girl. He said it so deliberately that she laughed. "Perhaps you'd like to enter the lists?"

"I would," answered David, and, in the same spirit, "I hope she decides to come here. I wonder if she could be persuaded to look at me?"

"She might," replied Kitty, judicially. "I'll ask Lee's opinion. She can describe you pretty closely. And, I reckon, she'd give you a good character." She paused expectantly. But neither of her visitors responded, and she went on, "I might as well tell you, though, the whole sad truth at once. She's for neither of you. Lee writes that she's already engaged to a Vicksburg man. His name is Carson."

David was conscious that Boone had suddenly withdrawn his attention. "Here!" he said. "You have an opinion, even if the lady of the picture is preëmpted. What do you think of her?"

"I?" repeated Boone, slowly. "I think her face is rather — cold."

"You do? That's strange." David examined the photograph again. It was his opinion that, if ever there was a face in which was warmth and expression, it was this. But Boone was answering one of their hostess's inconsequential questions, and he laid the picture down.

A few days later, meeting Kitty, he referred to the photograph and Boone's comment on it. "What was it he said?" she asked, carelessly.

"Why, you heard him."

"Oh, yes, — that. I remember now. But — afterward?"

"He didn't mention the picture to me."

"Is that so? I had an idea he admired it. I must have been mistaken."

"I'm sure you were." David reflected that her perceptions were not always acute.

Perhaps this was the reason Kitty exhibited such lively interest in the girl of the photograph when next she wrote to Lee, yet spoke never a word of having shown it to Boone.

One afternoon a week later David carried a letter to Doctor Shirley from his uncle. The Doctor read it slowly, then, for a minute, sat gazing at the fire. When he became aware of his silence, he apologised. "Talk to me a little while, won't you?" he asked. "I am lonely. What is the news?"

David had little to tell. But he mentioned the threat which came from South Carolina, and the Doctor's brow clouded. "It is folly," he said, — "folly of the worst kind. But the State is in the right. She can leave the Union if she wishes. No one has the power to keep her in. And if she needs help — But it must never go that far. Nothing will justify war while there is a way out of it."

"A good many men are trying to find a way," David answered. "Mr. Buchanan — "

The Doctor's mouth contorted with disgust. "He has helped to bring it on," he exclaimed. "Each man must do his part to prevent it. I shall free my slaves at once."

David started. "What does Lee think of that?"

"I have not told her yet. I have not mentioned my intention to any one. But she will agree with me. It is best. I have been thinking over it a great deal. If war came, I would — yes, I would do what I could for the South. But Mr. Lincoln is right about slavery. So I am giving up my people. I hope it will do some good."

"I hope it will," was all David could say. He looked at the slender figure in the chair, the eyeglasses raised above the peering eyes. And pity mingled with his respect. Here was a man who would fight, fight bravely, he was sure, and for a principle; yet was willing to yield his own comfort and a good share of all that he possessed to save others. But what would the sacrifice accomplish? Repeated a hundredfold it would not clear the troubled waters now. Besides, there was Lee!

It was as if the Doctor read his thoughts. "It's little enough I'm doing, after all," he said, with an apologetic smile. "There are only six of my people left. Once upon a time — " He checked himself, and added, "Sometimes I think it would be just as well if I gave up the old place here altogether. Some of my wife's family still live in the South. And Lee — if anything should happen — "

He raised himself in the chair and laid a hand on David's knee. "David," he said, in a lower voice, "I wish you would do something for me."

"Whatever it is, I'll do it, Doctor."

"Well, it is this. If there is war I have told you what I would do. And I haven't made as many friends around here as I should have. But you are a friend, and I trust you. Would you — if anything happens — look out for her? I mean see that she was safe with her people. Would you do that?"

Whatever passed in David's mind, his answer came promptly. "I will. I promise you. But you mustn't talk that way. There are years ahead."

VIII

The girl from the South

THOSE were the days when the telegraph wires from the South carried one word to the North, — secession! The Mississippi Legislature directed commissioners to be sent to the other slave-holding States to secure united action on secession. Jefferson Davis declared in the Senate that the Union cost "little time, little money, and no blood." The Secretary of the United States Treasury resigned because secession was not recognised by the Government. The Secretary of State resigned because the administration did not recognise the need to aim against secession. One half of the Senators and Representatives of eight Southern States called on their constituents to organise for secession. On December 20th South Carolina seceded from the Union.

And all the while a President of the United States temporised and tried to propitiate. What was his remedy? A day of humiliation and fasting and prayer because of "the dangerous and distracted

condition of the country." When the Representatives from a State which had made its own "declaration of independence" called upon him, he received them — but with pompous dignity "as private gentlemen." Such was his brave assertion. When the Secretary of War, having distributed the army and navy to the four winds of heaven, made a last wholesale seizure for the enemies of the Union by sending them over one hundred cannon, the Secretary resigned.

At last the man who had sworn to do his duty to the United States stiffened into a semblance of resistance. He declared that a United States fort in South Carolina would be defended to the final extremity. And to see that his command was carried out, told one hundred and twenty-eight men to do their duty.

But nearer to David's own home there were things being done of which the purpose was not less plain. There was talk and lowering looks everywhere which told which way the tide of opinion ran. It was no secret in St. Louis that the governor and lieutenant-governor of the State were for secession. It was little more of a secret that under cover they were doing all they could to strip the State of the power to resist when the time for action should come. State troops assembled and recruited for an object which no one misunderstood. A United States arsenal,

deprived almost wholly of its garrison, awaited the first hand which should be laid upon it.

And, if there were other men who drilled to defend the arsenal and the city, these did not call themselves soldiers. They met not to destroy, but to save a Union, and they made no threats. Years before, they had come across an ocean to find a new home. Here they had found it. Time and hard work and peace had knit them into the fabric of the Union. They loved it. Now they meant that it should remain unbroken.

In their halls in the southern part of the city they met and fell into line and marched and learned how to hold their arms and bodies against the time when a musket should mean a bullet and not an empty barrel.

But there were others besides who made no parade of their doings. One September day of that same year, down in Charleston, half a dozen influential men met and formed a secret society — "The 1860 Association." Its purpose was "to resist Northern aggression, and influence public sentiment." In this last phrase the assassin found his text. He heard it in the South, and passed it on. He heard of it further West, and repeated it to the next of his kind. So it came to the North, and to David's State.

But its march was as stealthy as its purpose. David laughed when one day 'Lias, wagging his head, told him, "There is something going on

about here that I don't understand. And I don't want to come any nearer to it. I voted for Douglas; I would vote for him again. But that's something I can say to any man. This new association, whatever it is, which they've asked me to go into, isn't to be talked of in the open. So I won't join. I told him so."

"Told whom?" inquired David. "I'm all in the dark."

"Tom White." 'Lias spat into the road. "And I'm as much in the dark as you are. I was told it was a Democratic association. 'For what?' I asked. 'To help the party.' 'But how?' I said. 'I did what I could by voting. We were licked. What more can be done till next election?' Then Mr. White puts his tobacco in a lump in front of his teeth and turns it round and round with his tongue. 'There's plenty still to be done,' he says. If I come in, I'll see. 'All Democrats must stand together,' he says, and — there you are."

David's frown struggled with a smile. "So?" he remarked. "But where are you? and where is this association?"

'Lias threw out an arm. "It's everywhere, if Mr. White's pulling of his goatee and rolling of his quid and mumbling out of the corner of his mouth are a say-so. It's nowhere, if a plain question that gets no answer means anything."

"But who are the other members?" This time

David's smile worked its way clear and he turned his face aside to save 'Lias's dignity. But he did it too late.

"I've said I don't know, and I don't know is what I mean. If you think you can find out from the next man, you'd better try. I'm sure there's some deviltry going on, and I'm damned if I'll put my foot into it if wearing my own shoes'll keep me out."

David rode on, repeating the words he had heard. But they didn't convey a definite impression. He concluded that at most they suggested another nebulous scheme of Mr. White's for a political organisation of which he should be both oracle and custodian of the funds.

A week later the story was recalled to him sharply. Riding back from the Barracks, he took a little used road which cut across country in the direction of the settlement. Half a mile along this he came upon a dilapidated barn standing among trees away from the road. The farmhouse had been burned years before. Since then the place had been unoccupied. Now he noticed many wagon-tracks and hoof-prints which led up the weed-grown lane toward the barn. The tracks were fresh. Curiosity led him to follow them.

At the barn he dismounted, and tried the double doors. They were fastened. He walked around a stone ledge of the foundation-wall and sought to

look through a window. It was tightly boarded up. A little ashamed of his persistence, he turned the corner of the building. Below him, facing the enclosure which had served as a cow-yard, he saw another door.

This was fastened, but a quick pull jerked it open. He looked in. The place was lighted only by the rays of sunshine, which slanted between cracks in the boarding and filtered through a cobwebbed window overhead. At the level of his feet a litter of musty hay had been trodden into the dirt floor. In a corner a large pile had been pitched down from the loft. The prospect did not encourage investigation. He was about to turn, when his eyes rested on the ends of several planks which showed beyond the edge of the loft floor above him. They seemed to lie at regular intervals, a foot or more above the floor. The curious suggestion of a row of benches made him look again. He slipped inside, climbed the loft ladder, and saw that his fancy had reason.

Across a couple of saw-horses and as many boxes were placed half a dozen planks in parallel rows. Facing them, near the far wall of the loft almost empty of hay, was a box with a nail-keg on end behind it. The ridiculous resemblance to the inside of a back-country schoolhouse was carried out by a spatter of blots on the box-top, and a broken pen or two stuck into the wood.

Amusement made him stare about him. A party of children might have been playing here. But when he saw the stain of tobacco juice on the floor, his perplexity waxed. In the gloom of the place each moment he picked out more readily the shape of objects around him. But still he was without clue to the mystery. Then, because it was loose under his hand, he raised the lid of the feed-box and looked inside.

The box held a variety of things. In one corner was a pile of folded cloths. He picked up the topmost. It was a piece of black muslin three or four yards in length. It might, he reflected, be used for a dozen purposes, none of which seemed to explain its presence. In another corner a second pile of black cloth proved to be made up of small strips with eye and mouth holes cut in each, and strings at the ends. He turned over the improvised mask and stared at it. Then he laughed. Surely this hinted at a den of robbers. He was tickled by the picture of a band of highwaymen sitting here gravely in rows, like school-children, facing their chief on a nail-keg. He folded the cloths and replaced them. Then his hand met something hard, and he brought it out. It was a tin box of moderate size, and he tried the lid. But it was fitted with a lock and would not open. He shook it. Inside something soft slid and rustled. It was easy to guess this was paper. But, however that might

be, it was not to be seen. He put back the box reluctantly. Then, looking over the rows of plank seats, solemnly arrayed across the floor, the ludicrous idea of a robber-band at its lessons was recalled, and he laughed again. Sometime he would come back and surprise them. The afternoon was going; he left the barn a little nettled by his failure, ridiculous though the solution of the whole puzzle promised to be.

But with his hand on his saddle he remained staring at his feet. The ground was of red clay, made sticky by a recent rain. Dotting it, within a space of a few yards, were neat round holes an inch across and half as deep. They were the marks of a crutch. He identified the little ridged indentation near the top of each. It had been left by a rubber buffer. Such a buffer his uncle had had made to his special pattern, to deaden the clicking of the stick.

He reached home at dusk with a poor estimate of his wits. But his uncle helped him to a conclusion. He spoke from the window where he sat, glanced at David and turned away again. After a minute he remarked, "You were surprised to find that the old barn was being used?"

David was powerless to resist a start, but he answered, steadily, "Yes." Then, with sudden resolution, he faced about. "Will you tell me why you have been going there?" he asked.

The profile against the dim window never moved. "I will. I went there to convince some of our neighbours that the election was over."

"You mean that this — Democratic Association meets there?"

"Yes. And it can do no good now to stir up feeling. I was afraid there might be something of the kind proposed. I was mistaken."

"They have given up the idea?"

"I cannot say that. But they will not try to make trouble. And that is what I was anxious about. Already we have too many men at large with weapons in their hands. I am a Democrat. I do not wish to see my party make the mistake of beginning violence."

"Then you don't belong to this association?"

It was not till afterward that he realised the strangeness of his uncle's failure to resent the catechising. "No, I do not belong to it," Mr. Mayhew said. "But I shall do what I can to counsel its members. We are on the edge of a precipice. Do you know it?"

"I know we have elected a President, and we have always abided by our choice." David was conscious that this would not have been his answer a month ago.

"Then you are against secession?"

"I voted for Mr. Lincoln. I will try to stand by him."

His uncle's hand went to his face and smoothed his chin. "So, if Missouri leaves the Union —" he began.

"She will not do it," David interposed. "There are enough men to hold her where she is."

"And you are one of them, I suppose."

Suspicion of a sneer fired David's blood. "I will do what I can," he returned, hotly. "But Missouri belongs to the North, and there she will remain. If we have to, we can do without the South."

Mr. Mayhew's face came around quickly. "Yes, yes," he said. "You are right in that. The South can go its own way."

David did not misunderstand, and the construction placed upon his words rankled. But he would not dispute it yet.

With every hour reason and something more subtle than reason forced him along the way upon which he had set foot when he voted for Mr. Lincoln. Looking back, each day he saw himself a little further from the dividing-point where abolition and State rights crowded each other on a common road. Still he did not hesitate, though he moved reluctantly, stung sometimes by reproach at desertion of the old beliefs.

But this reproach did not assail him now. He had been made to say what he did not mean or, at least, more than he was willing to admit. Mr.

Mayhew's averted face and silence were eloquent. He walked from the room. Then as he changed his riding-clothes, he noticed the red clay which clung to the soles of his boots, and suddenly his uncle's discovery of where he had been was explained. How often, he wondered, had that same prescience been the deduction from as commonplace an observation.

December came in with the threat from the South ever growing louder and more insistent. Then arrived the day when the news was that South Carolina had seceded. And at his feet David saw the line drawn. It came on him, as it came on thousands of others, like a lightning flash, for all the mutterings of thunder. For the time it left him stunned. But when the smoke still rose above the city to the north, and steamers churned the yellow waves of the Mississippi, and men worked in the fields, the numbness passed. He watched and listened and waited for what should happen next, surprised that, though the rift had started, no one had been hurt.

It was so. The country was waiting — waiting for the tall, homely man in black clothes which never fitted him, and a high stiff hat which rose a foot above other men wherever he walked: waiting for a man who turned from the extended hand of one of the most powerful politicians in his State to lift a little girl so that she might look over the crowd

at a passing band: waiting for the man who listened to many, spoke what was in his own mind, liked best to tell a story at a corner-store, yet who had said he would rule a people seven millions of whom were to be his bitter enemies. The hand of God wields strange instruments.

Boone wrote that, in his part of the country, business had come nearly to a standstill. He had some idle hours, and would travel down to St. Louis and spend Christmas at Gravois. He would arrive on the twenty-fourth.

David got this letter in the first part of the week. On Sunday he met the Doctor outside the little church which the Captain had helped to build, and learned that Lee would be home on Tuesday. She would bring a friend with her, Beatrix Pemberton, her cousin.

Kitty Marshall had a note from Lee also. "You are to have the chance you wished for, David," she announced. "Beatrix is coming to visit Lee. I hope she has been prepared for conquest."

"Who is to be the victim?" he inquired.

"You. Didn't you say you wished she would come up here? And didn't I remind Lee that your fate was in her hands? Miss Pemberton is the girl of the picture."

"Now, how was I to know that?" David complained. "You wouldn't tell her name. Did Lee say how long she will be here?" He spoke a shade

too earnestly. In Kitty's eyes lurked mischief. "I think she has been asked to stay until spring. It will be a splendid opportunity for you. I will help you. I am sure Lee will agree. But don't be rash, David. Remember, Beatrix has been accustomed to have gentlemen at her feet."

"Of course I will be diplomatic," he returned.

But the mock gravity did not deceive Kitty. How she delighted to play at Providence! It was really an unselfish act to prod David's feelings. He was provokingly uncommunicative. Also she feared she might get out of practice otherwise. Oswald, strange to say, had not recovered from his latest dismissal.

"Lee is to have a big party on New Year's eve, you know," she went on. "That will be your chance. I am going to Lee's on Monday evening. Come for me and take me over."

"I'm afraid I won't be able to," David answered. "You see, Boone is coming that day, and I reckon —"

"I reckon he can go along with you."

"No; Boone has never met her, and — well, I know he wouldn't want to call on her uninvited. Especially on the evening she arrives."

Kitty raised a pretty muff and rubbed it softly against her cheek. Over the barrier her eyes studied the countenance of the smooth-shaven, broad-shouldered young man, busy drawing on a glove.

"Oh," she murmured. The exclamation struck

home. David did not look up. He was honest with himself; he knew he was a failure at lying. And Kitty had the grace to suspend the torture for the time being.

When five o'clock struck on that Tuesday afternoon, and Lee and her cousin had not arrived, the Doctor's uneasiness found voice. He had been walking the length of the library floor, picking up a specimen, now and then, and adjusting his glasses with care a dozen times. "I should have gone for them myself," he affirmed. "But they were to be here at four o'clock, and Lee insisted I should not take the drive. Old Zack, too, would have been sure I gave him freedom only to insult him if I had suggested that they weren't safe when he was driving."

"Oh, they'll be here soon," said Kitty. "The road's not good to St. Louis. They've had to drive slowly. Don't worry, Doctor."

She proved a prophet. Five minutes later, peering from the window, she declared she heard the sound of wheels. The Doctor hastened to the door.

A voice from the porch called, "All right, father! Here we are." Then Lee was in his arms, her hands clasped behind his neck. But she quickly disengaged herself. "Father, here is Beatrix."

Kitty delighted in a pretty girl above everything else, unless it was tormenting those she liked. "Oh, she is splendid!" she told Lee afterward. "I always despised red hair. But hers! It isn't

red, it's bronze. And her eyes! They are the duskiest, daringest eyes I ever saw. That picture you sent — pooh! I don't see how a man could do anything but fall in love with her."

Lee made light of their delay in reaching home. "The road was bad," she explained to the Doctor. "The horses didn't like it. Once we had to stop and quiet them. You see I am all here, Daddy. No pieces lost. Beatrix is as whole as when she left Vicksburg, — only very tired."

But when the three girls were in Lee's room, — for Kitty was to remain overnight, and that mysterious process had begun which admits of many pauses and invites confidences, the combing of hair, — Lee told the facts, or at least as much of them as she wished.

"It was so exciting," she said. "It wasn't any use to worry father with it. But we *had* a runaway. Such a one! And there was a man in it."

Kitty, curled on the edge of the sofa, rocked in anticipation. "Who was he?"

"I never saw him before," answered Lee. "It was when we were two miles from home. The carriage struck a rut, and bumped against one of the horses. Old Zack tried to hold him, but he got hold of the bit somehow, and they both began running. The road was dreadfully rough. Beatrix and I just hung on to each other and were jerked

back and forth. The carriage rolled, and I expected it would topple over. We couldn't do anything. I knew if Old Zack couldn't pull the horses in, it was pretty bad. So we tried to stay where we were and waited. Every minute it got worse. Old Zack kept yelling 'Whoa!' and then he began talking to himself. That scared me for sure. I knew he was frightened then. But, all at once, we passed a man on horseback. He had stopped at the side of the road. We heard him call out. Then we could hear his horse galloping on the road behind. Suddenly he shot by us, and got hold of the head stall of the nearest horse. And" — with brush suspended — "what do you suppose happened then?"

"What?" Kitty was in imminent danger of pitching to the floor.

"He was jerked right off his horse. It was dark, but we could see him fall. Beatrix screamed. I did, too. But he didn't let go of the bridle. We saw him fighting with the horse. Then he got the best of him, and the carriage slid sideways so it pretty nearly upset. But we had stopped. We were so frightened we never moved. Zack gave me the reins, and got out to look at the horses. He and the man stood there, pulling at the harness and patting the horses, and talking. We could hear the man's voice plainly. It was deep, and he spoke

slowly. But that must have been because he hadn't much breath left."

"But you saw him? He came to the carriage, didn't he?"

"Yes, he came over and stood at the door. 'I hope you are not hurt,' he said. I told him we weren't, and we couldn't say how thankful we were to him. He said it wasn't anything. Then I noticed blood running down his cheek. Beatrix had turned her head. She says she can't stand the sight of blood. I asked him to let me bandage the cut for him. He said he wouldn't bother me to do that, but I made him get one of the candles out of the carriage-lamp. Then he came close to the window with the candle. And then" — pointing with the hair-brush dramatically — "Kitty, that was the last we saw of him."

"What! What do you mean?"

"I mean," said Lee, facing the bed, "I mean that he stumbled, dropped the candle in the road, said something about his awkwardness, and that he must find his horse, anyhow. The next moment he was gone."

"He didn't come back?"

"That's just it. He never came back. We drove on after a few minutes."

"Well, of all the things!" remarked Miss Marshall. "You don't suppose he was so badly

" Kitty, that was the last we saw of him "

hurt he went off — to die alone?" with trembling voice.

"Now don't be silly, Kitty," severely. "He left, but he was quite able to walk and ride, too. He probably went on wherever he was going."

"He might have been a robber, and his heart relented when he saw the horses go by, and knew you must be dreadfully frightened," suggested Kitty.

Miss Marshall! Miss Marshall! Were senses ever so awake to suspicion, or tactics so adroit as yours? Yet you failed. Failed if you thought to draw out that third figure in white which sat with back to you on a low chair and spoke not a word, as you long ago had noticed. The fingers which wove among the bronze hair rippling to the floor gave no sign that their owner heard. And the mirror was turned the wrong way to reflect whatever she trusted to it.

Even when you asked so carelessly, "Miss Pemberton, what do you think?" there was the briefest pause in the ministrations of the comb while a composed voice replied, "What can I think? Lee has told the story. I surely was frightened. I saw very little."

"You must have been. I don't wonder," returned Kitty, sympathetically. There was admiration in her heart, but it was not so much for the sweeping lines of the tall, white figure which now stood facing her, the sleeve fallen away from a

round arm raised to coil the hair. Kitty had met her match. Lee's dignity and proud resentment she respected. Diplomacy challenged her admiration even when it baffled her.

When Beatrix had departed to her room, Lee was very quiet, and Kitty thought she had gone to sleep, when suddenly she raised herself on an elbow. "Kitty," she said, in a low voice, "if I tell you something, will you promise you'll never say anything about it?"

"Of course I promise." A dimpled hand concealed something that might have been the beginning of a yawn, but was not.

"Well, then,—Beatrix knew the man who stopped our horses. I am sure of it."

"Yes," said Kitty, quietly. "I knew that."

Lee uttered no reproach. "But what does it mean?" she asked.

"It means," answered Miss Marshall, "that I intend to find out who the man is."

IX

One new year's night

WHEN Boone did not come that night, David decided that he would be down the next day. With the next day came Christmas, but not Boone. Instead, a letter from St. Louis. Boone had been unexpectedly recalled home. He was mightily sorry. But what could a fellow do? It looked as if he was to be busy, perhaps for a month.

David did not reflect upon the physical phenomenon which so suddenly demanded the constant services of a physician a day ago absolutely idle. He was disappointed. But the day following he got a note which made him reconsider. It was written on a small square of tinted paper. He read it quickly, and put it into his coat pocket. He read it again that night. And after each reading he frowned and said "No," emphatically. But by the next morning he forgot the "No," and, by afternoon, he was of such cheerful mind that he sat down

and with rueful smile wrote a reply addressed to Miss Shirley.

Kitty asked him if he was going to the New Year's party. "Of course," he said. He looked at her so challengingly that she would have been afraid if she had been any one else but herself. As it was, her eyes were maliciously reminiscent, though she contented herself with a quiet, "Oh, nothing. I knew you would go."

David would have been pleased at that moment if she had been a man. Was there any reason why he should not go, he asked himself. Of course not. She had asked him to come. It was his duty to an old friend to go.

The New Year's party was a great occasion. There were two fiddlers from St. Louis, besides Lee's piano. Unsanctified hands were laid on the Doctor's treasures. Lee tied her father's cravat and patted him on the shoulder. "The handsomest man we will have," she said, cocking her head critically, and standing off to view him.

His eyes twinkled through the glasses. "Not excepting even David?"

"Oh, David is a very old friend," she answered, with wisdom. Something immediately made her face burn, and she turned to the mirror for one last touch to the lace scarf which had slipped from her shoulders. There was a rose in the puffs of her hair. She straightened it with a smile of sat-

isfaction, and made a curtsy to the glass. "I have no business to be nice to you," she said, under her breath. Which was a strange remark for a young lady to make to her own reflection.

A charming picture it was, David told himself that night. She stood at the end of the room. A multitude of mysterious little ruffles ran around her gown. She looked at him sideways as he drew near. "Why, it's David," she said, softly. She held out both hands. Perhaps they lingered in his clasp. Kitty, near by, declared she counted ten. "Oh, why can't he always wear that coat?" she said, afterward. "He is so broad! He holds himself this way." She walked across the room. A certain tall young man with smooth face and square chin would have walked more humbly had he been present to see.

But he never knew that she was looking. It might have been that he was not looking for her. "Lee," he said, "you've been growing up."

"And you don't like it? I hoped I wasn't doing it badly."

"You're not. I wish I could tell you how well you do it. To-night especially. But you haven't given me a fair chance. You've been away so much. Now," he comprehended her figure with a glance, "won't you dance with me?"

"Not now. I am a very important person here to-night."

"You ought to be generous. Remember, you banished me —"

She held up a rebuking finger. "Don't talk of that." Then she spoke about his work. Had he secured that position in the county office?

"I shall start in April," he said. "The place is promised to me." He began to tell her of his plans. Did they both forget that she was the hostess? David started when a voice at his elbow spoke her name, and he turned to see Philip Randolph. A gentleman Philip looked, and something of a dandy besides, in his black coat and ruffled shirt.

Unreasonably enough, David's impulse was to demand why this gentleman was present. But he shook hands civilly, and went away, to muse and have his aggravation increased at the sight of Lee's laughing face over Philip's shoulder as they swept by. So this was what had postponed the dance which he had asked for! It must have been promised by letter. He had had no idea Philip was to come. It was a long journey from Mississippi. These were distinctly irritating inferences.

Mississippi, however, sent something very stunning. A tall young woman with dark eyes which burned you, and white shoulders gleaming from the meshes of a black gown. Ah, she was dangerous! And partners, how many had she! David talked to her in a corner between dances. She knew many things about him, it seemed. "It is

mighty good to find a man I don't have to begin an acquaintance with," she confided. "You see, we've talked about you, Lee and I, — Mr. Ford. 'Mr. Ford'? How strange that sounds! — What was it we called you? David? Of course, that was it — David!" She leaned back, regarding him from over her fan with wicked satisfaction.

He answered gravely, and she continued to smile. Then, with a little flicker of her lips, she closed the fan, and began to speak about those who were passing. He must tell her who they were. It was so hard to remember some names. He must consider himself an old friend of hers, and she would depend on him. So he began to tell her of Kitty and Oswald, and Nina Rennert, and the others, and presently mentioned Boone. "I wanted him to meet you," he said. "He has seen your picture. Miss Marshall had it. I know you would like him."

"Would I? So he saw my picture?"

"Yes, and I thought it was a good portrait. But I see now that it is not so good."

She took her revenge by raising her brows and saying nothing, and he repeated, "I wish Boone could have met you. You'd be great friends."

"Oh, would we?" The fan never stopped waving. "At least I should like to see him. Where is he?"

"He could not come to-night. He was invited,

but at the last moment was prevented by — an engagement."

"A professional call?"

"You knew he was a doctor?"

"Didn't you say so? No? Then Lee must have told me. A young doctor with a large practice? How strange! So unselfish of him, too, to give up a party like this." Her voice qualified the eulogy.

"He would have come if he could, you may be sure." David flushed.

"No doubt. And he must be interesting, and all that, from what you say. How sad to have missed him! Do you reckon I'll survive?"

There was a glint in David's eyes and a retort trembled on his lips, when Oswald came up and laid claim to the dance which had begun. David rose and bowed stiffly. She smiled. "Don't be angry! You look so terrifying, and I want to talk to you again."

But he was not appeased, and Kitty, seeing him stalk by, laughed softly. "Oh, what has put that poker down David's back?"

Half an hour later he was passing a doorway when a fan was laid lightly on his shoulder. "Mr. Ford — Mr. David Ford," some one said, "I am very tired of dancing." It was Beatrix.

"Can I be of service?" he inquired.

"No, no. Of course not. I touched you only to hear you growl."

His grimness melted. "Did I look as glum as that? I ask your pardon."

"Well, since you have done so, you can take me over to — let me see! Some nice comfortable place where we can watch them all. Yes, our old corner."

Our corner! He looked at her suspiciously, but her eyes were innocently wide open, and he went with her. A lamb to the slaughter, Kitty would have said. There was nothing of the martyr in his bearing. But he was sure of one thing: Boone's name should not cross his lips. Who can explain, then, how it happened? She asked him a question, he answered, and Boone's name had come up. "Perhaps, after all — " she conceded.

"You will like him? Of course you will. But there's one thing you mustn't mention, if you would agree."

"And that is?"

"Slavery. He is what you call a Black Republican, I suppose."

Her eyes blazed. "A Black Republican! I hate them all!"

David laughed. "Then what will you say of me? I voted for Lincoln myself."

"And you are against secession? You believe that some States have the right to bully others — and all the rest of the wickedness?"

"I haven't crossed that bridge yet. But we don't have to fight about it."

"Yes, we will. We will fight about it before long. The South won't stand it."

The fan ceased waving. She was sitting up, straight and wrathful.

"Why, you look as if you would take a hand in the fighting yourself," he remarked.

"I will," she answered, passionately. "I will, when the time comes. If I can do anything to help the South to whip the North I will quick enough." Then her lip curled. "But we won't need women for that. We have men — down in Mississippi."

"Well, the North has some men, too."

"Men," she repeated. "Yes, it has some, I reckon. But most of those I've seen I wouldn't give that for!" The fan clicked contemptuously. "They're too busy."

"Busy!" he repeated. Then, gravely, "Yes, busy trying to keep the peace."

"And to buy and sell," she added. "It is about all the North thinks of. Well, let it go ahead. But let it stay up here. Don't come South. If you do, we'll surely chase you out."

David smiled. "I'm glad of the advice. If I should come down your way, I'll steer clear of Mississippi. And I'll tell Boone to do the same, if you'll let me."

"Tell him, by all means. But I reckon the warning isn't needed in his case."

"I am not so sure of that. He has a habit of doing his own way."

"Now, has he?" she said, and was silent a moment. Then she remarked, "You think a great deal of this friend of yours? Boone, as you call him." Her voice had dropped.

"You would not ask that if you knew him."

"If I knew him?" she repeated, almost to herself. "Well, forget I was angry just now, and tell me something. What is he like?"

He searched her face and saw that she was serious. It was not easy to begin, but once started, he went on warmly and finished, "A great, big-hearted, good-looking fellow, as honest as the day, and always ready to do a good turn for any one. We went to college together. We lived together for two years. I never saw him do a thing that wasn't square. Now he's at a sort of hospital up in Galena, Illinois, working hard, and always looking on the bright side of things. But it's mighty slow and discouraging for him. Besides, he hasn't been treated right. There was a girl —" He shut his lips with a frown.

"Yes?" She drew her fan between her fingers while watching him from under lowered lids.

He was looking out into the room. "That is all."

"But there must be more. I was — interested."

"It is not my story to tell."

There was a pause before she spoke. "I can hardly believe that. At least, it was your story to *hear*. He told it to you, it seems."

"You don't understand. He — "

"No," she interrupted. "I don't understand. Where I came from, men don't repeat all that happens to them." She paused, and finished lightly, "But it is no concern of mine. Pray, don't abuse a confidence. The girl was a fool. Such a man!" with scornful emphasis.

At two o'clock that night Lee was almost asleep when Kitty asked, "Lee, did you ever meet the man who is engaged to Beatrix?"

"No, I didn't. He was away when I was in Vicksburg. But he was described to me."

"What does he look like?"

"Like no one I know. He's tall and dark."

"And they are really engaged?"

"Beatrix never said so. I think they are, from what I heard."

"Oh!" There was a little silence. Then from the same restless person, "I wish Doctor Hadley had been able to come to-night. I was talking to David about him."

"Yes," drowsily.

After another pause, "I wish you could find out

who stopped your horses the night that Beatrix arrived."

"Oh, go to sleep, won't you?"

There was a longer silence. Then a laugh smothered in a pillow. Lee raised her head in protest. "Kitty, what *is* the matter?"

"Nothing. I was just thinking how foolish some people are."

It was in the beginning of the second week in January that the Captain came down to St. Louis on business for the leather firm. David was in the city for an interview with one of the officials. It was settled now that he was to have the place to be vacant in the county engineer's office in May. Also he carried a letter for his uncle to a lawyer. Correspondence over Mr. Mayhew's cotton interests had increased during the winter. David met the Captain by chance in the Planters' Hotel.

The Captain had the look of a man who was thinking a great deal. And his clothes were seedy. He clung to the rough felt hat and cape coat. But his hand-shake was firm and his voice hearty. He said business was as good as could be expected. He hoped to be made a partner in the leather house soon. But the situation generally was threatening.

"You're thinking about secession?" David asked.

"Yes. I don't understand why these States secede.

It's suicide. But it looks as if five of them would go out."

"Five?"

"Yes." The Captain named them. "They will hold a convention in Montgomery, they say," he went on. His brow knitted. "It's a bad outlook. It never should have gone this far. It's the fault of the old granny we have down in Washington. He's done harm enough. But I'm afraid he'll do something worse before he's out of the way, and give the States that secede the sympathy of the whole South."

"But he's refused to surrender Fort Sumter. Perhaps he'll stick it out till March."

The Captain smiled. "It don't look that way to me. United States forts seized in Alabama, Georgia, and Florida, and a United States garrison forced to evacuate Fort Moultrie. That's close to war. Why haven't we a man for President?"

"We will have soon. Lincoln!"

"Yes, Lincoln." The Captain repeated the name, and went on, "The man who Senator Toombs says is an enemy to the whole human race. If he is, we will soon see. He has a hard job to tackle."

"And he's equal to it," returned David. "Besides," he added, "it may not come to the worst. I reckon there's a good deal more talk than fight in the South."

The Captain's look was slow and steady. "You're

coming on, David," he said. "You'll be ready when you're needed. But don't make any mistake about these Southerners. They do bluster; they can't help it. It's their way. But they can fight, also. Both sides are wrong in one thing. Each thinks the other isn't half as good as it really is."

He fell to chewing on his cigar in silence, then took it from his mouth, and while he turned it in his fingers regarded it critically. His head had dropped a little to one side, after his old habit. "But they'll find all that out when the time comes," he said, partly to himself. "And it won't be long till then, I believe."

David was on his way home from a ride the following afternoon when from a cross-road turned the light wagon in which his uncle rode. Mr. Mayhew was alone. His crippled figure was hunched up on the seat. His eyelids quivered, and his hands were restless. But David asked no question as he rode by the side of the carriage.

Presently, Mr. Mayhew leaned forward. His mouth was twitching. "David," he said, "they'll never be able to stop it now. It's secession for the whole South. They tried to send a steamer with supplies and Union troops to Fort Sumter. The guns at Charleston fired on her. They drove her back."

"They shot at her?" repeated David, incredulously. "The rebels?" The word slipped off his

tongue without notice. He bent forward in his saddle, the blood had run from his face.

"Yes. But it was the people of South Carolina who did it. They are not rebels. South Carolina is a sovereign State."

"How do you know that this has happened?" David asked.

"It came to me, through one of my business correspondents."

"You're sure it is true?"

"Quite sure."

After that they rode without speaking. When they reached the house, Mr. Mayhew went inside. David stood on the porch as the carriage was driven away. Something made him stare at the wheels of the vehicle. To the edge of the tires clung a coating of red clay. He knew where clay like that came from. Once he had found it on the soles of his own shoes. A discovery had come of its presence there. He walked swiftly into the house. But with his hand on the door of his uncle's room, he halted, then turned away. It would do no good, he reflected. His uncle would explain it as he had once before.

The next morning he met Kitty riding. "David!" she cried. "They have had great excitement at Lee's. Beatrix got a telegram yesterday afternoon. She packed up and went to St. Louis last evening. Mr. Randolph, her cousin,

is to meet her there and take her home. She wouldn't say why she had to go, but they couldn't persuade her to stay. And, — oh, yes. She left a message for you."

"For me?"

"Yes. She said you'd be given a welcome whenever you came South. What did she mean?"

He evaded the question.

But that afternoon the news made her meaning clear, if that was needed. Mississippi had seceded from the Union.

X

The spark

AT twenty minutes of five o'clock on a Friday morning in April, 1861, a man in one of the batteries of Charleston harbour trained a gun on a pile of masonry above which floated a strip of red, white, and blue bunting, and fired it. The shot fell into the water, and the water seethed and closed over it. A cloud of white smoke drifted down the wind, and was gone. The report of the shot resounded in every city and village, in every prairie and mountain settlement, the country over. For four years it beat upon the ears of men. In the voice of the old fellow with straggling gray beard and those bronze medals pinned to his breast, you may hear it to-day.

Boone heard the echo of the shot in his little office at noon of that same day as he closed a bag of instruments and started on his way to a patient. The Captain heard it as he lifted a bundle of rough, tanned leather to carry it across the pavement into the store. The leather slipped to the tailboard of

the wagon. The Captain's back straightened, and he pulled off his slouch-hat. "It has come," he said. Then he lifted the leather again, and bore it inside the building. There was no more business that day. From the hillsides came down women with aprons flung over their heads and children hanging to their skirts. Wagons were left in the streets.

In the leather store the Captain sat on a box, and visitors thronged through the doors. Every one knew the store; it had been a meeting-place for a long time. Many knew that the square-built, brown-bearded man in rough clothes and a stained apron had once been in the army. "What was to happen? Will Sumter hold out?"

"Major Anderson says his provisions will be exhausted by the fifteenth," the Captain answered. He had lighted a big cigar, and he chewed on it without pause. His head was craned forward, and his eyes jerked toward the doorway each time it was darkened. He was excited. No one had seen him so before.

At supper-time, Boone, his bag still in his hand, climbed two hundred feet in the air to the top of a bluff on the north side of the town. There was a small brick house behind a fence of palings. The Captain stood in the doorway, scanning the street. He was still biting on a cigar. He hailed Boone. "Any more news?"

"No. They were still firing on the fort, the last I heard."

The Captain turned his cigar in his mouth, and led the way into the house. After supper they went down to the main street.

The morning sun was sparkling in the windows of the little house when the Captain began his climb to the top of the bluff again. Sumter still held out.

As he shook hands with Boone, he said, "I believed I had done being a soldier. But I was wrong. The United States government gave me an education. If I know anything which can be of service to the government, I think I ought to offer it."

This was on Saturday morning. On Monday came the message, "*Sumter has surrendered!*"

Posters were stuck up along the main street. They called for a meeting at the court-house the following evening. At sundown on that day, a band paraded the street. The American flag floated at its head. It wound its way along by the river which cut the town in two. There were cheers for the flag. Perhaps there were tears also.

But there were no tears in the Captain's eyes. His face was lined, his hat pulled down over the brow. Some one saw him as he passed, and jerked a thumb toward him. "There goes a queer man. They say he was a first-rate soldier once. He's a back number now, by the looks of him."

Boone met the Captain near the little brick church which they both attended. It was there, on the Sunday following that memorable Monday in the April on which Abraham Lincoln swore to maintain the Union against all enemies, that he had told the Captain a story. "Do you remember the 8th of September, 1847?" he asked.

"Very well," said the Captain. "We started in at Molinos del Rey that morning."

"And do you remember an old mill back of the fortress?"

"I do." The Captain smiled. "But *you* don't."

"Hardly. But I know some one who did remember it. He came into the door of the old mill just as a Mexican raised his musket to fire on him. You sprang on the Mexican. The bullet went wide. The man in the doorway was my father. My name is Hadley — Boone Hadley."

The Captain grasped Boone's hand. He scanned his face. "You look a little as he looked then," he said. "But you're bigger. I haven't seen him for ten years."

"No, he left the army. He died two years ago — here."

They went back together from the church. Boone ate a Sunday dinner in the house on the top of the ridge. He had made a friend.

Now they walked together along the main street, following the flag, and came to the court-house.

It was a good-sized stone building, but it was packed with excited men. The Captain worked his way in. Boone and he found a place in the back of the hall where they could see the platform.

The mayor was there, and he made a speeech. "Fellow citizens," he cried in a big voice; "I am in favour of any honourable compromise." The Captain passed a hand across his mouth. Some one hissed. "I am in favour of sustaining the President so long as he works for peace." A dozen hisses, and the mayor wiped his forehead. "That is to say," he went on, "I am for one flag and our laws, — right or wrong." A stamping of feet broke out. "Yet I am opposed to making war on any State if a compromise can be effected."

Now the hisses and the cries of protest broke out all over the hall. The Captain said to Hadley, "That is the sort of thing which has brought us where we are."

Boone's face was white. "The cur! Why don't somebody shut him up?"

Somebody did. A big, raw-boned man, with a jaw that stuck out aggressively, reared his head above the crowd.

"Congressman Washburn!" exclaimed Boone, and he began to stamp. "*He* will talk out, at any rate."

Washburn did talk out. "Any one," he cried,

" who will try to stir party prejudices at this time is a traitor!"

The last word was plumped out. The mayor leaned forward to resent it. But if he spoke, no one heard him. The dust rose from the floor in a cloud under the pounding of feet. Hats whirled above the excited faces turned on the big man with the heavy jaw.

Then Washburn raised his arm, and they listened. He proposed a resolution. His voice rang out the last pledge, " We solemnly resolve, that, having lived under the stars and stripes, by the blessing of God we will die under them."

A chorus of cheers smote against the walls. Men crowded about the towering figure. Then some one called a name. " Rawlins! John Rawlins!" The crowd took up the cry.

To his feet leaped another man and worked his way toward the front. Tall and slender, his swarthy face pale and his wide mouth working, he sprang on the platform. He flung back his coal-black hair, and threw out an eloquent arm. It was a gesture of anger and defiance. The hall was still.

Boone knew of him. The Captain knew him. " The lawyer for our firm. Used to work in the woods himself," the latter said. " He is a Democrat, but the right kind."

He *was* the right kind, if the silence of the packed room meant anything. Eager eyes were fastened

on the passionate face that looked down from the platform. For half an hour they checked the torrent of his speech only to cheer him, and spur him on. His arm swept the air and his powerful voice plead with them, scorned them, arraigned them, cursed them for the wrongs to which they had submitted and the blind faith with which they had awaited the issue of a political compromise that disgraced them. Then, leaning far over the platform, came the bugle-call, "*The day for compromise has passed. One course is left us. We will stand by the flag of our country and appeal to the God of battles!*"

The hall shook. They sprang on the platform and grasped his hand. Some one tore a flag from its fastenings, and was carried on another man's shoulders, waving its folds. Far up the street they heard the roar which smothered the crashing of the band on the steps.

The Captain made his way out. "There will be nothing more done to-night," he said. "But Rawlins struck the right note." Then, after a little while, "Hadley, I believe I will go into the service, if they want me."

"Want you!" cried Boone. "You're the very man they need. You know what it is. They'll give you a command right off."

"I don't know about that." The Captain's cigar

moved to the other corner of his mouth. "But I'll offer myself, anyhow."

On Thursday evening there was another meeting in the court-house. This time, as the posters plainly said, it was to raise volunteers for the field. An old militia captain was in the chair. The Captain and Boone had come late, and sat in the back of the hall. All at once Boone laid a hand on the Captain's sleeve. "Hear that!" he said. "It's you! He's calling you."

"Yes," said the Captain, but he did not rise. Then the chairman called him again, and Boone urged him, "Go on. Get up. They want you. You must."

The Captain got up. Heads were craned. He heard them asking who he was. He walked forward slowly. His slouch-hat was crushed in one hand. His long, blue overcoat, faded and white at the seams, flapped open about his knees. At the platform he paused, his head stooped, following the bend of his figure. There was the shadow of a smile on his bearded lips.

"Get up, Captain! Up on the platform!" they shouted. Still he could hear them asking who he was.

With one hand on the desk above him, he hesitated. But suddenly he turned and mounted the platform and faced them. The smile was gone. "Citizens," he said, in a clear voice, "we are here

to raise volunteers for the State of Illinois." He stopped.

"What for?" some one called.

"*To fight,*" came back the answer, sharply. Then he went on. He told them what a company was, how many men were in it, how it should be officered. "And the first thing you must know," he said, "is obedience. Fighting is not a picnic. It means hard beds, rough food, and little of it sometimes. It means heavy work and danger, and doing what you are told to do, whether you like it or not, without questions. If you put your name down, that's what you must do. I will aid you all I can in forming a company. I am going into the service myself."

He halted, his head still inclined as if listening. His lips were closed tightly. Boone, far back, felt his cheeks burn at the weak cheering which followed the thumping of his own feet. But it was plain talk. There was little of the ring to it which had made the blood dance when Rawlins stormed at them. He realised this, and waited with grim patience. Rawlins spoke again. The fire of his speech ran through the crowd. Thirty names were on the list when the meeting broke up. The Captain, parting with Boone at the foot of the bluff, looked up at the little house, hidden in the gloom.

"I don't believe you'll see me at the leather store much longer," he said. "I'll have all I can do among those fellows who signed to-night."

Sixty men had signed the rolls when another night fell. The Captain, running his finger down the list, did not find Boone's name. But he did not mention this when he saw him the next day, and as he pulled down his hat-brim and walked away, he said to himself, "It isn't because he's afraid. It isn't because he doesn't know his mind."

How could he know the truth. Boone lingered on a threshold. The drums called him away. A taunting figure refused to turn the head which might — what might it do? Yet Boone knew he would despise himself if he yielded to its temptation.

On Saturday morning a slender, straight figure stood in the doorway of the leather store. A soft hat was tilted back from the dark, strong face. "Hello, Rawlins!" called the Captain, coming forward, a pen in his hand.

"There is to be a meeting over at Hanover tonight," was the answer. "We're going to raise volunteers. Come along, won't you?"

"Not if I am going to be asked to make a speech. You cornered me the other night."

Rawlins laughed. "You talked plain, hard sense to them. What's wrong with that?"

"I won't do any speech-making," the Captain answered, bluntly. "But I will come. I'll drive you over. There's a young doctor I want to take along."

Rawlins laughed again. "If you don't speak,

I'll — I'll have to raise hell for two. I'll meet you to-night."

Boone was in the carriage when they pulled up at the frame schoolhouse that night. He had climbed into the wagon without a word. There was a crowd in the room. The benches were jammed into a corner. Rawlins brought these benches down crashing with a speech that drove the men into a frenzy. Then, with a twinkle in his eyes, he called on the Captain.

The Captain was near the front. He had seen what was coming. He got up, and said he wouldn't make a speech. "But I'll do what I can to help you put down this rebellion," he told them. "If you'll come to Galena where we're raising a company, I'll show you all I know about drill. That's in my line."

A good many straight-backed, broad-shouldered farmers stepped up to the desk and put their names down. Rawlins grasped the hand of each man who signed, and wished him luck. Boone spoke only when he was asked a question. He sat with jaw clenched and gloomy face. They were halfway home when he said to the Captain, who was beside him, "The President will get those seventy-five thousand troops he has called for."

"Yes," replied the Captain. "I reckon he will."

"And that will stop all this trouble? They won't need any more men?"

The Captain did not answer.

"Won't it?" asked Boone.

"No. I don't think it will. This is a bigger job than most people seem to believe."

"A damn sight bigger!" joined in Rawlins, from the back seat. "They'll eat up seventy-five thousand men, if it gets started."

Boone looked away, then suddenly faced the Captain. "You're going into it," he said, fiercely. "You're married. What about your wife and children?"

"I'll do all I can for them. But I've got to go. I'm needed. It looks to me as if I owed that much to my country."

"But you?" Boone said, turning on Rawlins. "Are you going?"

"No." Rawlins's voice had softened. "I can't go. My wife won't be here long. I've got to stay while she's alive. After that —" He gripped Boone's shoulder. Then he loosed his hold. "I can't go now."

Boone knew that his heart had leaped at the first "No." But the contempt that he felt for himself a moment later! He clung desperately to a hope. He might not be needed; or — she might say go.

The Galena volunteers were organised. They called themselves the Joe Daviess Guards. Boone, one day in the following week, walked into the place where they were drilling.

The Captain, his hat pulled down, was amongst them straightening out their lines. His face was pouring sweat, his brow furrowed. But there was a flash in the gray eyes that seemed to be everywhere, and his voice clicked like a sabre slapped into its scabbard. The men lost no time in doing what he said. Presently he came over. "What do you think of the uniform?" he asked. His mouth relaxed. "Made up in three days, so far as it goes. I picked out the stuff and helped design it. It will do, I guess. Anyhow, it isn't uniforms. It's what's in them."

"But they elected you captain of the company, I heard," said Boone.

"Yes. But I think I can do better in another place. I was nine years in the army."

"You ought to have a regiment."

"I could command a regiment," the Captain said. "I believe I'll go to Springfield, if I don't soon get the chance here."

It was on Thursday of the same week that Boone, returning from a visit, stopped at the end of the bridge across the river. Up the main street came a crowd of boys; then horses — on one of them the mayor, in all the dignity of a black suit and high hat. Behind him men, mounted and on foot, carrying swords or canes, broad belts and tinsel braid across their breasts, the Masonic insignia upon their coats. Following these, a fire company in burnished

helmets. Then a band playing its loudest to lead the swaying flag at the head of the Joe Daviess Guards, who, in all the gaudy stiffness of ill-fitting uniforms, watched their feet, proudly conscious of their bravery and imposing front.

The column passed. Close behind the tailing of boys and men in the wake of the procession walked a stocky man in blue overcoat and slouch-hat. His eyes were on the hurrying backs ahead. He carried an old leather bag.

Boone stepped into the street. "Hello, Captain!" he said. "Where are you going?"

"To Springfield." The Captain halted. "The Legislature meets next week. I'm going to see if they want me. Washburn says they will."

"You'll get your regiment, of course. They need you."

"They'll need a good many before long," the Captain said.

Boone's mouth worked, then set closely. He wrung the Captain's hand, turned on his heel and walked across the bridge.

One day in the early part of May he saw Washburn coming out of the railroad depot. He knew that he had been at Springfield. He touched him on the shoulder and asked him how the Captain was. To the leather store had come reports of many discouragements.

"He's got a start now," the Congressman said.

"But it was tough pulling for awhile. Everybody had political claims stronger than his. He wanted to come home a week ago. Said he hadn't come hunting for an office. We kept him at Springfield by main force. Then Governor Yates gave him a place as clerk."

"*Clerk!*" repeated Boone. "I heard he was sort of military adviser."

"Yes, a *sort* of military adviser. Ruling blank paper and putting down yards of cloth and dozens of buttons and pairs of shoes. A *sort* of military adviser. But he ruled paper first-rate, and kept his mouth shut except when something was asked him."

Boone's face was hot. "He ought to come back. It's a damned shame."

"It was," Washburn answered. "But he stuck it out. He's gone up a step, now. They put him in command temporarily at Camp Yates. He's mustering in troops."

"What rank has he?"

"No rank — yet. He hasn't any uniform, either, but the one he wore here. Don't worry about him. He'll come out where he belongs."

But in those days, when captains and colonels sprang from the ground in hundreds over night, the hours seemed to mark steadily decaying fortunes for the Captain. Boone heard of his experience at Mattoon with a regiment commanded by a swash-buckler who wore an arsenal at his

belt and knew nothing of his duties. He heard of his return to Springfield and of the stories told about him. "A failure," he was called. "A broken-down soldier, out for a job which he can't handle and won't be given."

So it looked. The President called for three hundred thousand men to serve for three years or the war. Mustering in volunteers was thought to measure the Captain's military capacity. While waiting the arrival of one of these regiments, eighteen miles from St. Louis, he rode into the city.

It was the 10th of May. The air was charged with excitement. Many of the stores had closed their doors. The streets swarmed with curious and angry crowds. From the windows scowling and anxious faces looked down.

That morning a man, who had foreseen a great deal which was to happen and provided against it, was busy at the United States arsenal south of the city. The Captain rode down there on a car, and shook hands with this quiet man, and also with a wiry, nervous man with streaming red hair, and eyes that roved everywhere at once. The Captain introduced himself to both. "You are acting at the right time," he said. "The arsenal and the city, too, would be lost to us if the sort of thing that's going on out at Camp Jackson was allowed much longer."

"It sha'n't go on," returned the red-haired man.

"We'll have them all in here by night." Then he dashed off to give quick orders to one of the lines of men. The Captain stayed until two of these lines of men, muskets in their hands, had started westward.

In the afternoon in St. Louis he learned that the red-haired man had kept his word. The State militia for a week had played at soldier in a pleasant spot on the outskirts of the city, and paraded in all the finery of new uniforms before their mothers, sisters, wives, and sweethearts. Now they were prisoners on their way to the arsenal, walking sullenly between the two lines of muskets. The Captain decided to go back to the arsenal and see them brought in. While he waited on a corner for a car, something happened.

Over a building on the opposite corner, a strange flag for weeks had flaunted its folds unmolested. Now along the street came a body of men and pulled it down. There were groans and hisses from the pavement, but no one tried to hoist the flag again when the despoilers had gone on.

But from among the crowd which lingered, an elegantly dressed young man with passionate face mounted the door-step and made a speech. It was a secession speech, and more than that. There were words in it which made more than one of his listeners look over his shoulder. It had been a bad day for the enemies of the Union in St. Louis. The

gentleman on the steps, however, was not deterred. From complaint he passed to attack. "Things have come to a pretty pass, when a free people cannot choose their own flag." He waved his arms. "Where I came from, if a man dared to say a word in favour of the Union, we hung him to a limb of the nearest tree!"

Some one hissed. It was powder to the speaker's fire. His hand dove into the tail of his coat, and from it he pulled a strip of bunting. He flung it on the steps. It was red and white and blue, and there were stars in one corner of it. "There!" he cried. "There is the rag we know the mudsills by in the South. I tore it down! And this is the way we treat it!" With that he spat upon it.

The Captain had been edging his way forward. It is possible, if the violent gentleman had seen the stern face beneath the battered hat-brim, he would have desisted. But no chance was given him. There was a sudden lurching of the crowd. Then it split, and a tall young man sprang on the door-step. His arm shot out; the elegant and violent gentleman pitched to the pavement.

The man on the step picked up the bunting and shook it out. There were cheers. His face was pale, though his eyes a moment before had been flashing. But when he saw them all looking at him, a strange expression of bewilderment swept his face. He turned, jumped to the pavement, and

shouldered his way through the crowd. As he crossed the street a hand was laid on his shoulder. "David, I guess you've about made up your mind," said a quiet voice. The gray eyes under the slouch-hat said a good deal more than that which David understood. He gripped the Captain's hand.

"I'm on my way to the arsenal to see them bring in those fellows from Camp Jackson," the Captain explained. "Come along."

David was rolling up the bunting in his hand. He thrust it into his pocket. "No," he said. "I can't do that. I have something to do which I've been putting off for a good while. I'm going to do it now."

XI

Calling of the Drums

THE next morning David rode over to Kitty Marshall's. But Kitty was not at home, and he went slowly away. To one who did not know him it might have seemed that he turned unwillingly toward Doctor Shirley's place. But there was a line about his lips which was not indecision. When he was almost opposite the mouth of the long drive, he glanced up between the rows of elms at the white house, and he leaned forward and patted his horse's neck. "Now, old boy," he said, half-aloud, and smiled with humourous appreciation of the act.

But as he straightened, he started and pulled up sharply. A horse was standing by the steps; two persons had come out on the porch. One of them he knew. He could never mistake that tall, gracious figure in white muslin with a bright ribbon at the waist and another in the brown hair. He was sure she was smiling as she held back her head.

But the other one! He could see only the straight,

muscular back, the loose-fitting riding-clothes, above the coat collar a shapely head of close-curling chestnut hair. A riding-switch tapped the boots, then was caught beneath the arm while both hands took the one extended in good-bye.

It flashed on David that this would be Philip Randolph, if Philip was not away South, riding with a command of Confederate troops. But the figure on the step turned to swing into the saddle, and he knew that Philip was not in the South. Who will blame him, then, that he waited there, screened by the trees, and saw the white muslin skirt lifted in a deep curtsy, and a broad hat waved in reply as the horseman started down the drive? And who will wonder that the whip in his own hand came down sharply on his horse's flank, as he wheeled about and galloped off?

The sun shone warmly on the afternoon of that same May day, and under a big maple a young woman stopped her horse as she reached up to break a switch from an overhanging limb. While she stripped the twigs from it, she talked to her horse. "Dick," she said, "I am afraid we will have a good many rides by ourselves after this. And we don't — that is, you won't like it, will you? It's not what you've been used to." The brown horse turned its head and strove to reach her with its muzzle. She laid a hand on its neck and stroked it. "Never mind," she whispered. "We won't let that spoil

our good times. No, we won't. If we don't have the company we've had before, we'll show them that we are quite satisfied without it, won't we? And Dick, we *can* have other company — if we want it. Some people don't mind coming a good deal further than from St. Louis to be with us."

The brown horse whinnied. It was certainly a whinny of approval, and the gloved hand stroked the neck again. "That's right. That's just the way we feel about it," she answered. Her head was high. It certainly would have been a bold person who denied her statement.

But while she gathered the reins, a rider came over the ridge ahead. He was galloping, and it was plain he was giving little attention to the road. If not, then why did he straighten himself so suddenly when a voice called to him? And why did he start at the sight of the trim figure in the saddle under the maple? There was nothing dangerous in the face into which he looked. Perhaps he anticipated the rebuke, "David, do you know you nearly rode over me?"

He had pulled in his horse. "I did not see you," he answered, gravely. "I am sorry. I was in a great hurry."

"So I perceive. You looked terribly disappointed when I called to you. But I couldn't have Dick hurt. Good-bye." She lifted her reins.

"No," he said. "Wait — that is, where are you going?"

"Home. I've been out all afternoon."

Suddenly he pulled his horse's head about. "I will ride with you," he said. He said it as if it was settled. Perhaps the decision awed Dick. At least, the brown horse turned obediently and followed. But at first neither rider spoke. And when this had grown almost unendurable, Lee, remembering something, gave a little gasp of relief. From her breast she drew an envelope and held it out. Her eyes were dancing. "Here," she said. "This is for you. It came in a letter to me. You are not to read it until you are alone. I was told it wouldn't be safe for any one to be by. But you must tell me all about it. It came this morning."

David took the envelope and stared at the handwriting. Abruptly he slipped it into his pocket, and looked away.

She laughed. "Now that's not fair. And it is suspicious, besides." His head was still turned. "David," she repeated. A frown took the place of the smile. "David, I will have to look into this. I'm afraid Beatrix must get another messenger."

His head came about with a jerk. "Yes," he said, "she should get another messenger. She can't get it quickly enough."

She understood the look on his face no better than

she did his words. "Why! What is it? You don't — do you mean me?"

"No, I do not. You know that I mean Mr. Randolph. He brought this letter."

She stared at him, and when she spoke her voice was quick and scornful. "I see," she said. (Afterward it came to her that she had seen very little at the time.) "I see now. I hope you are satisfied. Eavesdroppers and spies!"

David's voice trembled, but his jaw was stubborn and his eyes were angry. "You are mistaken," he said. "I saw him by accident. I was riding by."

"At just the right moment. That was — lucky. But he is safe now. All the Black Republicans about here can't stop him. He's gone to the South."

Where was David's reason fled? A dozen words would have set him right before her; a dozen words would have shown her how ridiculous was the secrecy which the imagination of her visitor had imposed upon himself and her. But such words were furthest from David's thoughts. Instead he said, slowly, "Yes, I can well believe that. He has gone to the South to join the rest of the rebels. It is where he belongs."

Her hands tightened on the reins. "You forget one thing," she said. "Whatever Philip is doing, he is not sitting still and talking while others fight."

How coolly she could speak when she was most angry! Every word stung, as it was meant to do.

But it did more than this. It extinguished the lingering spark of regret for what he had said. He shut his lips tightly.

They reached the big gate at the elm-shaded drive. He pulled his horse in. She passed by him. Then he said, "I will thank you to say good-bye to the Doctor for me. I am going to St. Louis this afternoon. I enlisted yesterday — for the Union."

One day at the end of that May, Boone, crossing the bridge in Galena over which he had seen the Joe Daviess Guards march a month before, met the Captain trudging back toward the house on the bluffs. "Why, how is it you're back?" he cried. He was sorry for the question the moment it was out.

The Captain carried the same old leather bag. Its sides were collapsed. His smile was not apologetic, but it was a little weary. "I got tired waiting," he said. "I wrote to Washington, offering my services, but they haven't answered yet, so I came back."

Boone swore under his breath as the shabby blue overcoat passed out of sight.

That night he sat on the edge of his bed, which a curtain hid from the rest of the room which he called office. A letter lay on his knees. It was from David a week old, dated at the camp at Carondelet. His regiment lay south of the city, spread out to

guard its approaches. David was immensely happy and busy. Of his decision to enlist, he wrote little. He had seen his way clear, and so he had gone ahead. When was Boone going to enlist? Or had he? No letter had come from him for several weeks. Was anything wrong? If he hesitated, here was something to make him decide. "It came too late to affect me," the letter added. "My name was already down. But at first it made me mad. Then I laughed at it. There is some fact in it, of course, but that fact we'll soon make fiction. You must help to do it. Of course you know who sent it. If you don't, remember who promised us a warm welcome if we came marching into Mississippi."

The enclosure was a dated clipping from a Vicksburg paper, and referred with sarcastic emphasis to a report made by the Captain upon the arms in the possession of the State of Illinois. Nine hundred muskets, sixty of these fit for use. "It is with such weapons," the clipping read, "that the Yankees intend to fight the South. However, the muskets probably will go round."

Boone repeated to himself. "Yes, they would 'go round,'" if there were many others like himself. And the one who had forwarded this rebuke was the one who held him back — held him back because it was *her* South — held him to his shame.

Hark! There were the drums again! Calling! Calling! His feet touched the floor. He crushed

the clipping in his hands; then suddenly rose and walked over to the table in the corner. Next he was arranging papers, writing a note. Quickly, but methodically, as if carrying out an old plan with impatience.

It was daylight when he picked up his hat and bag and locked the door behind him. He laid the key with an envelope addressed to his landlady on the small table. A moment more and the cool, damp air of the spring morning bathed his face. It was gray over the river toward the south. He could not pierce the mist there. But from the east, as he strode toward the railroad station, a shaft of sunlight fell upon his path, and he saw clearly where he walked.

Then came the train. Through the long hours of the day he stubbornly fought off reflection. At last he was in Springfield. Now he could hear nothing but the drums. How triumphantly they ruffled! It was the long roll.

To Springfield early in June came stories of disorderly doings at Mattoon, of drunken soldiers, desertions, the looting of smoke-houses, riots. A regiment was camped there, the last which the Captain mustered into service, — the Twenty-first Illinois Infantry. Then one day arrived an imperative order from the governor, and the regiment was marched to Springfield, trailing its ill-fame along the roads,

warning of its coming speeding ahead of it. With the regiment marched into Camp Yates Lieutenant Boone Hadley, indignant, chagrined, powerless. A swaggering colonel was at its head. Boone watched him strutting about, pistols in his belt, then with a grunt of disgust turned away. He did his best, and hoped for a change of command.

The change came soon. The day after they reached Camp Yates the story went the rounds that there was to be a new colonel. The governor had telegraphed to Cincinnati for him. He was on his way. Who was he? They knew little more than his name. Two months ago he had been an enrolment clerk, later a mustering officer. Boone knew him as the Captain.

This was on Sunday. It was expected he would take charge the middle of the week. On Monday he arrived. Boone, in front of his men, drawn up on the State Fair grounds, saw him walking across the dusty level. With him were two members of Congress, — McClellan and Logan. They were showy figures. Between them the plain man of middle height, in shabby clothes, would never have been noticed. Jokes were cracked in the uneven lines of men as they saw him approach. "What sort of a colonel do you call that? A saw-buck! Hay in his hair! Lay-down-in-the-mud! We'll put him through the ropes!" Boone's face crimsoned. These were good, sound men behind him, but they needed a

strong hand as badly as many of them needed uniforms.

McClellan, Logan, and the Captain mounted a platform facing the regiment. McClellan and Logan made speeches. There were big words in McClellan's speech. But the men seemed impressed. Logan made a ringing appeal to loyalty, and got a salvo of cheers. Without warning he turned to the back of the stage, and hooked an arm in that of the Captain and led him forward.

The laughter and jokes began again. The man who faced them was very unlike a soldier. His coat was rusty, and buttons were missing from its front. His hat was stained and crumpled. There was neither fire nor sternness in his face, as he ran his eyes over the ranks before him, his hands on the railing.

"Your new commander!" cried Logan, and stepped back.

The plain man made no response. His eyes still soberly ranged the faces turned on him. Then he spoke.

"Men, go to your quarters!"

The words had the snap of a gun-lock. There was silence. Smiles vanished, heads came erect, figures stiffened. Here was the master.

XII

Flouting a Uniform

THERE was a camp at Jefferson Barracks. It was the one of the chain which reached westward and north, and bade a governor who, in one breath, had announced his loyalty to the Union, and in the next called for fifty thousand militia to defend Missouri from the Federal forces, keep his hands off the city. Within the half-circle of these camps the red-haired, rushing man who had seized the militia at Camp Jackson, and told the governor exactly what he was, commanded, now as a brigadier. One of his men at the Jefferson Barracks camp was a raw volunteer of six feet, with a breadth of shoulder, a boldness in the clean-shaven chin and a clear eye which made him respected. This volunteer had a way of doing what he was told without asking questions. But at every chance he would pull out a book with something about "Tactics" on its cover and read in it as long as his duties and an inflexible rule about lights allowed. There were a hundred men about David as big as he was

and with good stuff in them. But unconsciously almost they fell into the habit of asking him to settle knotty points about drill, dress, and other things.

Mr. Mayhew came to the camp twice. He said things which David could not understand. He had voted for Mr. Breckenridge. But that was past, he added. Mr. Lincoln was President now; it was a question of saving the country. Therefore he was for the Union. Could any sensible man who loved his country feel otherwise? He was of the opinion that David had done right in enlisting. He spoke confidently of the result of the war. But it threatened great losses to him personally. He was trying to hold his cotton business together. He had most of his money embarked in it. If war put a stop to trading, he must look for something else. There were — army contracts.

He almost persuaded David that he was a Union man at heart as well as in words. Before he left camp the second time, he was shaking hands with the colonel in command. It seemed he had a letter to him from some one influential in St. Louis.

Major Wilkins came down from St. Louis where he was in the quartermaster's department. He hunted up David at once, and there was a twinkle in his eye when he remarked, "It strikes me you fill out that uniform fairly well for a person who wasn't sure about State's rights a few months ago."

David would have resented this from many peo-

ple. To the Major he said quietly that he had learned a good deal in that time. He had heard from Boone how the Captain took command of his regiment. He asked where the Captain was.

"Up at Camp Yates, teaching them who is colonel. I was there the day after he took charge. One of the men ran up behind him and made believe to spar at him. He accidentally hit him. Well!" The Major whistled. "They call him a tyrant already. Wait till they've been in the field with him a little longer."

David often looked along the yellow clay road which disappeared in the direction of Gravois, and it was hard to believe that the place which he called home was no more than a few miles away. Even the ground around the Barracks was unfamiliar. The tents dotted a gentle slope; occasionally the smoke of a steamer drifted their way. But it did not look as it had on those days when he rode by it and some one rode beside him.

One afternoon he was doing sentry duty, and patrolled a line on the clay road which no one without credentials was to pass. Then there came three persons on horseback, and the two who rode ahead showed small respect for the blue uniform and the musket. They were talking to each other and laughing. Apparently they did not see the line which he guarded. It was the musket which checked them. It fell lightly, and its glittering point made a brown

horse point its ears. The rider glanced inquiringly at the uniform. "Mr. Soldier," she said, "please move that bayonet. We are not going to break any rules of your camp."

The muscles under the peaked hat were properly rigid. "You cannot go further on this road without a pass."

Kitty pouted. "I knew one of these new soldiers would stop us," she remarked.

But her companion was interrogating. "Who says we cannot go on?"

"I do. I am put here for that purpose."

"And who are you?" inquired Kitty, with withering contempt. "Come on, Lee."

But the bayonet was unwavering. The brown horse examined it with inquisitive muzzle.

Kitty giggled. "Look out, Mr. Soldier! He'll eat the point off."

A smothered chuckle came from where 'Lias sat his horse a few yards away. A month's tan did not conceal David's flush. But he did not budge.

Lee looked at the musket. "Don't be afraid," she said, encouragingly. "My horse sha'n't hurt your gun. But tell me, do you *have* to stand that way?"

David's brows began to contract.

"Gracious!" ejaculated Kitty. "He's going to have a fit. Call the guard!"

Then David spoke. "It is against orders to talk

to visitors. If you haven't a pass, you must move back from the line."

Kitty backed her horse precipitately. "Be careful!" she exclaimed. "I believe I was a foot across it."

Lee sat where she was and looked very severe. "Sentry," she said, "do your duty. Demand our pass."

David held out his hand. It was a pass properly made out and signed. He returned it, shouldered his musket, and stepped back.

The two riders moved forward a few feet. There they faced about. "And now, David," said Lee, "you can forget you are a soldier and talk to us. We've come to see you." The old friendliness was in her face. He yielded to the temptation of another look. She was leaning back in the saddle, her hands on the pommel, and with head a little to one side she regarded him with a smile which wrecked military gravity.

"You see I cannot talk to you here," he said. "It is against regulations. And I must move on. 'Lias will explain better than I could."

"But — you don't have to walk up and down and look as if you had swallowed a ramrod and it hurt you, do you?"

"Yes, he does," asserted Kitty. "That's what all new soldiers have to do, so they think. When he wants to eat, he calls the guard. They feed him.

When he wants to sleep — he remembers the ramrod and doesn't dare to. Poor soldier!"

What was David to do but laugh? But he resumed his severity instantly. How much he unlearned in the months which followed! "I must go," he said. "I am glad I saw you. Good-bye." He faced about, and started over his beat.

"David," began Lee, then changed her mind, and rode on. Kitty's voice came back, raised in admiration, "Oh, *isn't* he beautiful! See how straight he walks! And his gun! Sticking up over his shoulder! How fierce!"

David's sigh as they disappeared was a tremendous relief. No one had been by to see or hear. When they returned, he meant to be at the other end of his beat.

But he did not have the opportunity. The guard relieved him in half an hour, and the guard bore an order. He was to report at headquarters at once. David had a premonition as he walked to headquarters. There was a brush and a basin in his tent which he would have liked to visit first.

Headquarters was in the hands of the enemy. The colonel was prisoner. An unnecessary number of young officers had duties to perform near the place. 'Lias stood guard outside. On the only chairs sat two very contented persons.

It appeared the colonel had known Doctor Shirley for many years. He was anxious to show the camp.

But he could not go himself just then. "So he has ordered you to be our guide," explained Lee. "Do you think your dignity will allow it?" She regarded the tall young man with a look of properly impersonal inquiry.

"I can try," he said.

The colonel laughed. "When these ladies are ready to go, see that they are escorted out of camp. *Well* out of the camp."

"And we are to be the judges of the distance," qualified Kitty.

They inspected the camp. Many things were to be explained. He told what he knew gravely. Kitty's admiring interest was disconcerting. "I'll inform the Captain," she declared, finally. "It's a shame. You should have his place. You know it all — almost. And yet so young!" But David saw a light in Lee's eyes which recompensed him.

His visitors brought him news. Oswald had marched with General Lyon and fought at Booneville — in one of the first battles in the State. Kitty told him about it. It appeared, from her account, that Oswald had done most of the fighting. He had been wounded slightly. A week ago he had resumed his duties. He had been made a lieutenant. "A *lieutenant,*" she repeated.

"How did you know all this?" asked David. Lee's warning glance came too late. "So soon, I mean —" he blundered. "I didn't think you

and he—" Then the signal reached him, and he stopped. But Miss Marshall was not disconcerted. She had rallied to the defence of colours many times before. "I forgot you had been away so long," she said, condescendingly. "Oswald's mother's eyesight has failed. It was the least I could do, so I go to see her. I have to read her letters to her, of course."

"Oh," answered David. "I see." But it had been his impression that Mrs. Roner was favoured with reasonably good vision.

Lee's face was turned aside. Kitty went on, compassionately, "And there's something else you haven't heard of. The Colonel has gone."

"Gone? Where?"

"To the South. He went as soon as he decided that Missouri would stay in the Union. He's in Virginia now. And he's a brigadier-general," proudly. She repeated to him the story of the Colonel's parting with Miss Sarah, and, in a moment, was mimicking those doughty opponents. Kitty, how many times during those four gloomy years did your dancing eyes and relish of the humour in life lift you from the shadow of grief, and bring a smile to faces which thought they had forgotten how to smile! She enacted the scene. The Colonel coming into the room, pulling at his goatee, his face glowing, as he announced that he had been made *"a colonel in the army of the Confederate*

States of America!" Miss Sarah's brows raised inquiringly. And his unwise assertion, "Yes, madam, a colonel, — a colonel of a regiment of Virginia *gentlemen!"* Whereat the estimable lady opened her lips to remark, "Of course, body-servants are provided to carry the muskets of the *gentlemen."*

David obeyed orders when the time came, and escorted his visitors out of camp. Gravois was almost in sight when he turned back. Lee's fingers closed on his with lingering pressure. Her "David, good-bye," was faintly spoken. Afterward he told himself that it was so she asked his pardon for the injustice she had once done. A month has passed since that day, and it had become no less strange to be without her friendship. He went back to his post persuaded that the articles of war should be amended. Women should have a place in camp.

In fact there was little of the glamour of military life about the Barracks. Men in blue uniforms sweated and toiled at duties which were probably furthest from the minds of most of them when they enlisted. Squads tramped the pavements of St. Louis, and were halted in front of doors and windows while search was made of houses whose loyalty was suspected. Sturdy fellows with heavy hands rolled in on the trains from the West and North, and from the Lake shores, and were herded again on other cars, poking heads from every window and

waving good-bye, flocking out at every stop if chance was given them, joking and laughing at war until at last, penned in the camps of organisation, they fell into awkward step and grumbled at the heat and regulations. And their faces grew solemn and sometimes sullen when drill sergeants swore at slow movements and because they handled muskets as if they were rakes or axes or crowbars. Then as the steady grind of the machine of discipline wore them into shape, and they learned to know that a straight line meant eyes to the front and shoulders squared and even step, and the new rifles flashed more nearly together, they were put on trains again, and pulled away. And always toward the South.

To be sure, in St. Louis itself there was one man who wore a fine uniform and had servants and a body-guard in gorgeous attire. General Fremont had come to take command of the Western Department. His military establishment was the talk of the country round. But across the river, a few miles to the north, was another man, — a colonel of volunteers, who dressed as plainly as any of his men, plainer than many of them. And under him, brawny fellows fast learned to be soldiers.

A letter from Boone. In it news of the Captain. "We are being licked into shape," Boone wrote. "We have got only as far as company drill, but we know that. There is no fooling in this regiment, I

tell you. We're in your State now, as you see by the date-line of my letter. Your governor asked for troops, it seems. The Captain told ours that if he would order us to go, he needn't worry about transportation. It was the truth. The transportation came out of our legs. Lord, how mine ache! Across country to Salt River, not an enemy in sight. The Captain has a new uniform. Somehow it doesn't look right on him. But the same man is inside of it. And nobody in the regiment has a chance to forget that. There is talk that we are coming down your way. Be on the lookout for us. We may come to St. Louis."

This letter was dated from the little town of Mexico, Missouri. It came to David in a roundabout way, and it was at the end of the first week in August that it reached his hands. On the next afternoon he heard that the Captain was to be in St. Louis the following day. For a very good reason it was entirely within David's power to leave the camp on that morning of the 7th of August, and he travelled straight to the Planters' Hotel.

Was the Captain there? Yes, he had just come. David's name went up-stairs, David followed it a few minutes later. For the first time he saw the Captain in uniform. He was at a table, writing. Papers were piled beside him, a file of telegrams lay beneath a weight. He dropped his pen, and rose. He seemed to have gained inches in height. His

eyes were alert and steady, his beard was trimmed. He spoke as one having authority. "When does your enlistment expire?" was his first question.

"It expired yesterday. I intend to enlist again — to-morrow — for three years."

"Three years is a good while," remarked the Captain. "You are sure you want to do it?"

"Very sure."

"Then," said the Captain, "I want you to change your mind. I was appointed brigadier-general to-day. I need somebody like you. I want men around me whom I know. I'd like to have you on my staff. Will you accept?"

David's eyes shot a quick look of thanks. Then he frowned. He explained that he had had no experience in an officer's duties. The Captain waived the objection. Neither had hundreds of others who suddenly found themselves in command. Officers were needed. Besides, this was not a question of a command. When David gave his answer, it was a deliberate assertion. "Yes, I will accept. I believe I can be of more use with you than where I have been. But I have no commission."

"General Fremont will attend to that. Be ready to start with me to-morrow." He held out his hand. David gripped it. By the time he had picked up his hat and reached the door, the Captain was bending over the table again, writing rapidly.

XIII

A BAPTISM

OF that first month of David's duties at Cape Girardeau, where the Captain took him, there is little that concerns this story. The news of the Captain's new rank had gone ahead of him. His old regiment welcomed him, drawn up in line, the band playing. At nightfall, another band came to serenade him. There was a call for a speech. The Captain withdrew. "It's one of your duties as a staff-officer to make all speeches," he declared. But David shook his head. Some one else made the speech. An annalist of the Captain has it that this famous address closed with the exhortation:

> "Strike for your altars and your fires,
> Strike for the green graves of your sires,
> God and your native land."

But it is fairly certain that this was an invention of the same enterprising journalist who, on the boat coming down to Cape Girardeau, wrote of the Captain, "A smile is almost continually playing

about his eyes." The Captain did not smile often, and his eyes were uncommonly steady. But they missed little within their range. Boone told David of some things that had happened when the Captain was colonel. "They thought they could play with him," he said. "The day he was presented to the regiment, one man stole behind him and tipped off his hat. The Captain turned on him like a flash, and he went to the guard-house. We had a hundred men in there within a few days. One man came into camp drunk, and said he'd kill any one who tried to arrest him. The Captain heard him, grabbed him by the collar, ran him to the nearest line, and threw him out on his face. 'If you come back,' he said, 'I'll have you shot.' Line-running, drinking, and looting were at an end in a week. 'Never saw such quick work,' an old sergeant told me one morning. 'He's a little man, but he's colonel of this regiment, sir!'"

It was the same way with the Captain as brigadier. There was evidence of this every day. It was a bitter disappointment to them all when General Prentiss came down to Ironton, their new headquarters, with orders placing him in charge. They all understood that the Captain, too, felt the slight. But he gave no sign. He had mastered himself. The change of base to Cairo brought a better state of affairs. There he was placed in command of a wide strip of country about the big winding river. Toward

it his gaze was always turning. A fancy took hold of David that the Captain's fortunes were embarked on the great stream whose muddy breast rolled majestically to the south.

But August went by and September came in, and they remained at Cairo. David grew restless. It was drill, drill, drill. The Captain spent much of his time at his desk. It was in the back room of a house which looked down on the wharves of the squalid little town, wharves almost deserted, except for the steamers which carried troops and supplies. He was always pondering over the maps, tracing lines, writing letters and telegrams. All of which seemed to many to savour little of war. But also orders came from that little room, and men did things when these orders were read. It was ever so with the Captain. Though he did not wear a uniform, his stocky figure was the signal for instant attention and a bracing up all around.

Rawlins came to camp, as swarthy and outspoken as on the night when he cursed the volunteers' meeting in the Galena court-house. And Rawlins's mouth was still full of oaths. But he buckled to his duties with amazing energy. David liked him better with every hour he worked beside him.

Then one day something happened. On the night before, the Captain looked up from a telegraph pad and said, quietly, " I telegraphed Fremont this afternoon that if I did not hear from him to-night, I

would move on Paducah. I have not had a reply. I will take the town at once."

In the morning Paducah was taken. Not a gun was fired. David declared, with good-humoured disgust, "If this is war, we've wasted a lot of time drilling."

Boone laughed. "Oh, wait awhile. I reckon, my son, you'll have your fill of what you want. I believe we came out to fight."

Early in November the prophecy was fulfilled. There were three thousand men in the Captain's command. He had three wooden gunboats and several small ironclads, — "tinclads," Boone called them. On November 6th these moved. It was a dark night, and, as they slipped down the river on the crowded steamers, not a man except the Captain and his staff knew what was to be done. But, while the gray mist still clung to the bosom of the stream and cloaked the banks on either side, they suddenly understood. Somewhere back from the river on the Missouri side lay a rebel camp. Just out of range of the big batteries which loomed from the banks at Columbus opposite, they landed. Regiment after regiment passed into the mist, walking as if the cracking of a stick was to be heard for two miles. They moved away from the river. David, straining eyes and ears, rode silently by the Captain, until it seemed as if they had marched halfway across the State.

Then came a shot, a score of shots, a volley. Suddenly crashing volleys and a louder thunder, and the mist was torn with sheets of flame. The sun looked down on men running forward and falling back, and always sheets of flame or a blaze of crimson marked their line.

The ground was heavy. A corn-field for a time hid the firing-line. But as the men burst through the thin fringe of stalks which withered on its edge, the Captain shook his reins and they galloped ahead. All at once they were in a belt of woodland, and the bullets whistled above them, chipping bark from the trees. David knew his knees pressed hard against his horse's side. He felt the muscles of his jaw twitch. He swallowed something hard.

The Captain gave him a glance. "It's a queer feeling the first time," he said. "But you'll soon get used to it."

"It's sitting here doing nothing," David answered. "If I had a gun —"

The Captain nodded. "Let me tell you something. It was at Salt River a few months ago. We were after Harris. There were many hills. We rode up the last one, expecting to find him waiting for us. My heart jumped higher and higher in my throat, and it wasn't the first time for me. But when we reached the top of the hill, we found Harris had decamped. My heart went back to its old place. All at once it struck me that the enemy

was probably as much afraid of me as I was of him. There is a heap of comfort in that thought."

"There is," David said, and he meant it. But the man who sat so erect in his saddle was a bigger argument than the story he told. Many times afterward David's eyes sought out that stocky figure when the shell was shrieking overhead, and drew confidence from the immovable face. To the last it was not easy for him to remain with idle hands when under fire.

"They are wasting bullets," the Captain said, after a few minutes of broken firing. He rode forward. The men were behind trees. They shot at every glimpse of a gray jacket or puff of smoke. He moved along the lines, and talked to them. It struck David that he did it a good deal as a father would with a child. But it had its effect. The firing steadied. The men began to go forward.

Then there came a break in one place in the flashing line which faced them; and a hundred feet of ground was gained. Again a break, and another rush. Suddenly there was a sharp yell, and shouting ran up and down the Union lines. On every side the men in blue and patched-up uniforms converged, running at full speed up the slope. Toward the river, from three directions, fled the "graybacks."

"They've broken," cried the Captain, his eyes

sparkling. Then they were riding forward at a sharp gallop. All at once they were in the camp.

Quick as they had come, war had already put on its ugliest mask. On every hand pillage had begun. Horses were running wildly about. Supplies strewed the ground. Fires had been trampled out, cooking-tins scattered, tents here and there torn down, wagons stripped of their tilts. Soldiers were dragging out boxes and trunks, ripping them open, flinging their contents on the ground. Guns had been cast aside. Men filled their pockets and arms with whatever caught their fancy. At one side an officer stood in his stirrups and harangued a knot of cheering men. A band came up on the run, blowing and pounding with might and main a triumphal march. Everything else was forgotten in a frenzy of joy. Fighting was over, they yelled. The rebels had fled. Each man was to have his prize.

Boone stalked over, sweating and angry. David had seen him strike a man with the flat of his sword to force him to drop a leather-covered box. "It's no use. They've gone crazy," he cried. "What can we do?"

But the Captain's eyes were bent on the river, and Boone shaded his own eyes and swept the further bank.

On the opposite side, regiment after regiment was coming down from Columbus on the double quick. The shore was alive with men; the river

dotted with crowded boats; gun-barrels gleamed in the sun.

The Captain's face came about quickly. "Order the men to fall in. They'll be on us before we can reach the boats."

Boone darted away. David spurred after him. Up and down the lines the order ran, "Fall in! Fall in!" A few obeyed. The rest, drunk with joy at their victory and its spoils, kept hard at the looting. Officers threatened and plead. Rawlins charged among his men, his dark hair flying, his face ablaze, and cursed them with such curses as they had never heard before. It was in vain.

Then came the Captain. "Fire the tents!" he ordered.

It was quick work. A tent smoked, then flamed. A dozen blazes sprang up and down the rows of canvas. Suddenly from the east came a moaning sound, and a wagon disappeared in a flash with a terrific report. It was a shell from the Columbus batteries. A moment later came a blast of canister, sweeping like a scythe through a cluster of men.

The shouting and cheering ceased. There was a pause. Then panic fell on the human ant-hive. A cry went up, "We're surrounded!" The next instant a mad rush had begun. The boats! That was all they thought of. Anything to get away.

On either flank fell a column of gray uniforms, sprung from the earth, it seemed, and back toward

the boats the running men were driven, their ranks riddled with every volley, fighting because it was that or be mowed down at short range.

At last they were opposite the steamers, and a headlong plunge down the banks began. They poured across the landing-planks and flung themselves into the river, to swim and clamber over the gunwales. Steamer after steamer pulled out, jammed to its guards, crowded on the river side of her so that the opposite paddle-wheel spun in the air.

All the time the Captain sat his horse at one side, watching the panic with anxious eyes, uttering sharp, short orders for bringing up the wounded, powerless to check the mad rush. Beside him sat David. Nor be it counted to his shame that, as bullets sped more thickly overhead, he felt a cold spot spread between his shoulder-blades while his heart told off the seconds until the bullet should arrive which was not to miss. Is it the brave man who has never met fear? Or is it the one who sat as he did, quiet, with tight lips, his fingers pressing the leather of the bridle into his palms, and waited? Yes, and, even when the Captain turned and rode off — not down the bank to the boats, but away from them, along the bank to the south — turned and rode with him. It did not occur to him to hesitate. It seemed it was the thing he should do. The Cap-

tain heard the thudding of hoofs behind him, and glanced back. But he said nothing.

Suddenly he halted and looked down into a hollow. Then David knew what they had come for, and knew that it was a useless errand. When they landed, a detachment had been posted here to guard the boats. Now it was gone, caught up in the panic.

The Captain's eyes flashed. For a moment he sat where he had halted on the edge of the bluff, his figure outlined against the sky. In that moment something happened swiftly.

Over the little ridge above them suddenly appeared a man on horseback, and checked his horse. He was not a hundred feet away. David's eyes photographed every line of his figure and face, from the natty, booted legs and the cape thrown back over the shoulder, to the clear-cut, boyish features and the chestnut hair curling from under his hat. He knew him at once. It was Philip Randolph, and in his hand was a pistol. The sunlight glanced on its barrel as it rose to a level with the eye and bore upon the Captain.

There was no time for warning. David leaned forward. His body blotted out the figure in the blue overcoat on the edge of the bluff. So he sat until it seemed as if minutes had passed, his eyes fixed on the man on the ridge. Then the pistol was lowered and the rider waved an arm. His

laugh rang out clearly. He backed behind the ridge, and was gone.

David's body swung into the saddle, every muscle suddenly weak. The Captain wheeled his horse, and together they dug spurs, and raced for the landing. Shots rang out. Once a bullet lifted David's cap from his head. Behind him he heard a horse give a whistling snort. But he led the way, and soon had ridden down the cut in the bank.

A bell jingled as he crossed the landing-stage to the last steamer. There were shouts and the churning of paddles. He dropped from the saddle, to be flung sideways by the sudden lurch of the boat. He scrambled to his feet, and saw the water widening between the boat and shore. But his eyes travelled further, and over the top of the bank, two hundred feet down-stream, he saw the Captain's mounted figure rise above the edge of the steep clay-bank.

His shout of warning was loud, but it was drowned in the thunderous splash of the wheels and the shouting; and he dashed for the pilot-house. In the same moment he saw Boone running forward on the deck above him.

Slowly, as if it would never come about, the boat swung into the bank below, and as it touched and a plank was thrown ashore, they saw a piece of horsemanship that made them wonder. The Captain's reins tightened, his spurs went home, and his

mount plunged. The next instant, with fore-legs stiffened, the horse slid down the thirty-foot bank, and the Captain was on board. He dropped from the saddle and walked to the upper deck. He spoke to no one. Presently, with bullets crashing into its upper works, the boat was in midstream, heading away from the batteries.

Then the Captain turned to David. There was softness in the gray-blue eyes, but he only said, "It was well done. But you mustn't try it again. I need all of my staff-officers."

XIV

Beatrix

DID those Western volunteers, who at the end of 1861 came down to Cairo where the Captain had headquarters, ever forget the weary weeks of November, December, and the January of the next year, when through rain and sleet and snow, with scanty days of sunshine, they drilled under the eyes of the thick-set man in plain uniform? Did they ever cease to curse and grumble at their lot? Were their officers less restive under a process whose only purpose appeared to be to march as quickly as might be to some place without a name and then march back again? "Map-making" they called it. With every march down went another line upon the diagrams over which their leader pored night after night. Again and again they were called upon to study these diagrams and tell what they knew of their accuracy or offer suggestions for the making of a new one.

If David grumbled less than the rest it was not because he was more patient. Maps had to do with

his chosen work. In time too these particular maps meant much to him. He learned that they were more than so many marks and lines for streams and towns, and hills and hollows, or stretches of woodland and field. On them was laid out the great War Game.

One night the Captain looked up from a broadside of paper pinned to a table top and straddled a broad curving line with two fingers. "There it is," he said. "If we make that point safe we have the key to western Kentucky and Tennessee."

David recognised the broad line for the Ohio. Near where the Captain pointed was a criss-cross of lines marked Paducah. "We have Paducah," he replied. "Doesn't that close the river?"

"From the West, yes. But we must have the Cumberland and Tennessee Rivers if we mean to go south. We can't leave those two wasps' nests in our rear." He laid a finger on a spot on each of the rivers. "Donelson and Henry. We must take them first."

He bent again over the map. Boone from the opposite side of the table frowned at David. They both knew the situation. First it had been Fremont, now it was Halleck, who sat in St. Louis and said "no" to every proposal the Captain made to push to the south, while he chafed under the restraint and would not yield his plan.

But if the Captain was forbidden to move south

there was one who declared her purpose to come north without delay. The news reached David in a letter from Lee. "Beatrix," she wrote, "is coming to see me. And she will come by the river, just to show you, she says, how easy it is to go through the Union lines. David, I wish I could send you her letter. But I won't, for you would tear it into little pieces. She says the Northern troops are afraid to move. 'If the Captain will only stay in his house at Cairo and play checkers awhile longer' — those are her words — 'the soldiers of the South will come and kidnap him and the whole camp.' Tell me, David, is there any chance of that? I hope not. For I like" (David could not be sure that a dash followed and turned the letter several ways in an attempt to decide) — "the Captain."

He slipped the letter into a breast pocket, smiling at its mocking entreaties to warn the Captain of his danger. To Boone he said, "Beatrix Pemberton says she is going to St. Louis through our lines. Now I wonder if she has any real idea of trying it?"

Boone did not reply, and he repeated his question.

"How can I say?" was the answer.

"That's so," David assented. "But you must meet her if she does come through here. And it's more than likely. The steamer line is still open to St. Louis."

Kitty wrote several times. She heard that David had got his feet wet. Wet feet were dangerous. Did

he take proper precautions? He must remember he had not been a soldier long. He must be very careful. Especially he must be cautious how he handled his gun. Or was it a sword? One was as bad as the other. He was so careless. There was that day at the Barracks camp. How recklessly he held his musket! Why not put a cork on the point of the bayonet? He worried her dreadfully with his recklessness.

There was a picture of a figure, all angles, holding fast to its foot, the face contorted with agony, and the legend beneath, "The brave soldier boy. (No. 1.) 'Ground arms!'" David has that picture yet.

Just before Christmas came another letter from Lee. Parts of it were read to Boone. "'I was in St. Louis the other day and saw Major Wilkins — General Wilkins now. He said he congratulated the Captain's wife recently on her husband's new rank.'"

Boone remarked, quickly, "I know about what her reply was. She has everlasting faith in him."

"Did you ever hear his mother's prophecy?" inquired David. "She dreamed once, they say, that he'd be President some day. 'Lias told me she firmly believes it will come true."

"I hope it will." Then, with great seriousness, "But I have noticed, David, that mothers have

a way of expecting those things to happen to their sons."

David laughed. "At any rate, her prophecy is on the road to fulfilment. They talk of making him a major-general."

"So?"

"Yes, it's the report in St. Louis."

"By way of 'our own correspondent' at Gravois?" appended Boone. "It may not have struck you," he went on, "but it's a fact to which I would call your attention, my son, — merely by the way, of course, — that, for one who so heartily disapproves of the Black Abolitionists and their cause, a singular interest is manifested by Gravois in the welfare of the officers of this glorious army of ours."

"If you refer to Miss Shirley," said David, stiffly, "she has always had a great deal of admiration for the Captain."

"Did I say the Captain?" drawled Boone. "Perhaps I did. But there are other officers here who are not unknown in Gravois." He paused. The taunting smile faded from his face. "No, David," he said, soberly, "*she* has not forgotten the old days or the old ties. Pray God she never may."

David looked over. There was a moment's silence, then Boone burst out, "But some women have! Why is it? How are they able to forget everything but this cursed war? Why are the

women of the South so bitter? Why must they be our enemies in all things?"

David laid a hand on the one which rested on the table clinched tightly. Boone pulled it away. He straightened up and laughed. "But that's all gone by," he declared. "And you spoke about the Captain being made a major-general. Some one mentioned the report to him in my hearing last night. Not a muscle of his face moved. 'I had not heard of that,' he said. 'I don't want any promotion till I've earned it. There will be a chance for everybody before long!'"

It was the talk of headquarters that the Captain assumed few of the honours of his rank. Down from St. Louis came a brigadier-general of volunteers, tall, handsome, erect, with a splendid head of white hair. It was said he was under a cloud. But he had been the Captain's superior once, and the Captain had not forgotten it. He treated the old soldier with a deference which brought tears to his eyes. Afterward he instructed Rawlins, "See that none of these stories about General —— are repeated over our wires."

Rawlins ripped out a curse. "Him! There's more than talk of his disloyalty. Why the devil did they send him here?"

"Never mind about that. I've said what I want done."

Rawlins bent over the sheaf of telegrams in his

hand. "All right," he said. Then, looking up, "But there's this about it. More trouble is hatched along this river than we have any idea of. If you give them too many chances —"

"Well?"

"They'll gobble you up. There's enough rebel feeling about these parts to make it easy if you don't take care of yourself. They'd like first-rate to get hold of you."

The Captain remarked, "I guess they won't bother about me."

"The way he always takes it," Rawlins muttered, as he turned to his work. To Boone's inquiry he grunted, "It's these damn steamboat captains. Half of them are working for the rebels. I'd have a guard in the pilot-house of every boat that goes up the river, if I had my way."

There was frequent visiting between the lines in those days. Twenty miles below Cairo lay Columbus. Across the river just above Columbus was the invisible boundary between the North and South. Every few days a steamer would come up flying a white flag. Then a gun would be fired from the lowest of the Union fortifications, and a boat would go down to meet the steamer. There would be handshaking and an exchange of news. Rawlins declared that more than once passengers were landed who had no good business close to the Union lines.

At dusk one evening Boone, passing by a small

hotel on his way to headquarters, heard the departing whistle of one of these steamers as she dropped down-stream, and paused to note the drift of her smoke over the tree-tops, then faced about and stood motionless.

The door had been opened and a man came out, a slender, trimly built man in civilian clothes. Behind him, for an instant, was framed in the doorway another figure, tall and splendid, and Boone stared, his heart as eager as his eyes, as she turned and the door was closed, and she was gone. The man passed by him unnoticed and unnoticing, and still he stood. If only again the door might open and he might see her! Why did he wish it? If she saw him she would not wait. And would he go to her? Would he? "No, no," he repeated to himself.

He walked slowly away and to his room. There was no mistake. She was here. She had meant all that she said when she wrote that she would come to St. Louis and through the Union lines. David must not know that she was here, or learning this, find him. And for himself he would work hard and forget. But the night long he flung himself about the bed and knew that he had not forgotten and could not forget.

The morning he spent on the outlying lines, and did not see David. At noon he got orders from headquarters. He was to go up to Girardeau. A steamer would leave that afternoon. He walked

down to the levee. It was thronged with men. A few torn bales of cotton were piled at the end of a shed. He sat on one in the shadow of the pile and waited. For what? He knew, but would not acknowledge it then. Roustabouts ran up and down past him in a double line, treading to the humming of a river song. A few passengers straggled down and went aboard. Two officers stopped near him, and he heard their conversation as they lighted cigars. Yes, the Captain was going up to Girardeau on the *Platte Valley* that afternoon. He had just told Rawlins so. "Rawlins wanted him to have a guard," said one. "Said he'd be kidnapped yet."

"Rawlins is always harping on that," remarked the other. "They won't bother about the Captain. Rather have what the paymaster carries."

They moved on. There came some one else down to the steamer. Boone was not surprised, but his pulses leaped and he leaned forward. Her gown almost brushed his feet. A wide hat and a veil shaded her face, but the column of her white throat they did not hide. The sun turned the bronze of her hair to gold. She walked slowly. But she did not notice him. How near he came to reaching out a hand and bidding her wait while he told her something! Beatrix! Beatrix! his heart cried.

The dazzle of winter sunshine blinded his sight for a moment. He brushed a hand across his eyes. When he looked again she was on the gangplank,

showing a paper to the guard there. A moment later she had stepped on the deck. Hurrying to overtake her came a man in black clothes, swinging a light cane. He lifted a jaunty hat as he joined her and they passed out of sight to the cabin. Boone recognised him. He had seen him the night before on the hotel steps; he had met him at the time of that one miserable visit to Vicksburg. Randolph was his name and he was her cousin. Boone had heard that he was now an officer in the rebel cavalry.

But if this last fact was remembered, it was as quickly forgotten in a realisation of what chance had brought about for him. He had lingered on the levee — now he acknowledged it — hugging the hope that he might see her again before leaving. He had seen her, and now she was to be with him, on the same steamer, for hours. He walked on board slowly, his eyes eagerly searching for what he was glad they did not find.

As he reached the upper deck the pilot of the steamer came over, a tall, lathy fellow, with a cast in one eye. He was reputed to be the best pilot on the river. "Gen'ral goin' up?" he asked.

"I believe so," Boone answered.

"Well, I reckon we oughter get started soon. Might as well git loose anyway," the pilot remarked, and leaned over the railing of the upper deck and began to shout orders. Men on the levee cast off the

bow fasts. A bell tingled below, the water was churned up. Deck hands seized the landing stage. But still the steamer hung to the wharf.

Then down the narrow, dirty street came a square-shouldered man in a long, loose coat, only the star on the straps at his shoulders to indicate his rank. The Captain hastened. But with his foot on the gangplank he was halted. One of his aides, running through the crowd, held out a despatch. The Captain broke the seal, read it twice, and then turned about and sprang on the levee.

He spoke to the deck-hands and the plank was pulled in. As the steamer began to forge ahead Boone saw the thickset figure toiling up the street. When the town was hid by the trees he found a chair, and with his feet against the rail leaned back; and for an hour and more the clay banks marched past him and it may have been that he did not see them. He had many things to think about. He started when a hand was laid on his shoulder. "Come forward with the crowd," said a voice. It was one of his fellow officers, and, because he had no good reason to give for refusing, Boone said he would come.

Forward half a dozen officers tilted their chairs and smoked. They made him welcome, and he tried to fall into the conversation. But his eyes always roved astern, and he was poor company. Presently one of them complained, "The devil of a

fellow you are, Boone! Glum as a jellyfish! What's the matter?"

"I know," volunteered another, slyly. He was a big, red-faced Illinois man. "There's a girl aboard. I want to tell you, she's a stunner, boys. One of those beauties. She—"

"There is?" broke in the first man. "How was it we didn't see her? A woman aboard and a handsome one? Ye gods, look at me!" He surveyed ruefully his worn uniform.

The crowd laughed. The big man returned to his attack. "That's the trouble with Boone. He left his good clothes behind him. Now that he finds she's here—" He gave a comical look of despair.

Boone did not respond. He was sorry he had joined them. "Cheer up," one of them advised. "She'll forgive old clothes. Go over and speak to her. Present us."

Boone's face hardened, and the speaker subsided.

But a companion went on. "By the way, she had an escort. And somehow—"

"There they both are now," interrupted the Illinois man. Boone looked up. They stood at the end of the hurricane-deck almost immediately above. He could see her profile, the veil raised, a strand of ruddy hair blown across her face. She was looking over the river, pointing at something on the Missouri shore. The wind brought out the full, sweeping

lines of her figure, as she stood with arm outstretched for a moment, unconscious of scrutiny. Then she must have seen them, for she turned quickly, and Philip went with her. The Illinois man heaved a sigh. "I told you she was a Kentucky beauty," he said. "But the man with her — I've seen him before. It isn't a pleasant recollection either, if I'm right."

"Perhaps you shook hands with him at Belmont," suggested one of the circle, jocosely. They all laughed. The Illinois man carried a bullet away from the retreat at that place.

The big man brought his feet to the deck with a crash. "Belmont it was!" he exclaimed. "I'd swear to it. And that fellow wasn't wearing civilian clothes or a blue uniform either *then.*"

Boone started, but they did not notice it. "That is not unlikely," he remarked, quickly. "You may remember that there were a good many in our ranks at Belmont who didn't wear exactly a uniform. But they fought well. And I know this man. Also I know the lady he is with. You will oblige me by leaving them out of our conversation." There was a glint in his eye which carried plain meaning.

"Oh, all right, old man, no offence was intended," somebody apologised. But the Illinois man shook his head doubtfully, though he remained silent; and the current of conversation grew almost stagnant for awhile.

The opportunity came at last, and Boone got up and sauntered away, revolving something in his mind. He walked to the hurricane-deck. It was empty. He went through the cabins. But Philip was not there. And, coming out of a gangway, he was suddenly close to her. She was alone, leaning her elbows on the railing. She heard his footsteps, and looked over her shoulder, then quickly away again.

He had not meant to speak to her, but now it seemed that it was as well he should. It was a message only. "If I might offer a suggestion," he said, "it is that you remain in the cabin until we reach Girardeau."

There was no reply, and he repeated what he had said.

"Are you speaking to me?" she asked, without turning.

"Yes."

"Then, thank you for the advice."

"It is not advice. It is a request."

"A request? Pardon me. I think you have made a mistake."

"No, I have not," he said, gravely. "And I must repeat it."

"You need not do so. I heard what you said."

"And you intend to remain here?"

She did not answer, and he went on, "Because,

if that is so, I must remind you that this is a Union steamer."

"And, on that account, not safe for a lady?"

His face burned. "It is not wise for you to remain here," he answered. "I ask you to leave the deck until we land."

He saw her lip curl as she lifted her head. "How long, may I inquire, have you been in charge of this steamer?"

"I am not in charge. But I mean what I say. There is a good reason for it, believe me."

"I am not accustomed to being told I must do a thing. I shall stay here." She turned again to the water.

After a moment he said, steadily, "I am waiting."

"Then you are wasting your time," she replied. "If you have said all you have to say — "

"But I haven't. I have asked you to do something. Won't you do it?"

"I gave my answer."

"I cannot accept that answer. I don't want any one else to know — "

"Oh, you don't!" she interrupted. "You are solicitous."

"No, merely trying to be of service."

"You are going out of your way. If *I* am the object — "

His voice broke in, coldly, "You are not. It is your cousin."

Did she start? Her face was scornful as she leaned her back against the railing, a hand resting on either side. "Your sight," she said, "has grown wonderfully sharp since you joined the Yankees. Yes, my cousin is escorting me. I believe that is my affair and his. If you think not, you will find him on the deck aft. He will know how to answer you. Go tell him."

"I do not intend to do that," he replied. "This is a Union boat; I am a Union officer. I do not choose to know that he — Won't you comprehend? He has been almost recognised already. And he is in the Confederate army."

At last he saw her falter. But in an instant her head was erect and her eyes flashed back bravely. A sharp pain smote him. "Beatrix! Beatrix!" he said, in a low voice. "Do as I ask!"

Her arms dropped from the railing, and, for the briefest moment, he saw something in her face which made him lean forward. Then she laughed, "I must do as you demand. Because I am a woman — a Mississippi woman, and this is a Yankee boat." She stepped by him into the gangway, and was gone. She did not look at him.

They were drawing near to Girardeau. Here the channel swung by the Missouri shore. The current raced around a bend and ran strongly across stream. The steamer drew in until she almost rubbed the low wooded bank.

It was growing cold. Boone shook himself and, walking away, mounted to the hurricane-deck. Ahead of him the level rays of the sun flashed in the glasses of the pilot-house, and he made out the pilot standing there, alone, his hands on the wheel. Then in the shadow of the house he thought he saw another figure stealing to the door. The glare of light blinded his eyes. When he looked again the door was closed. But, in the same instant, the figure of the pilot was gone, and the steamer sheered toward the bank. A bell faintly jingled below.

For a moment Boone waited, uncertain that he was not mistaken. Then he sprang forward, and was at the wheel-house door. It was locked. He dashed to a window. The sash was closed. Inside a man he did not know peered through the western window, holding the wheel down hard.

Boone drew a pistol. At the same moment shouting broke out below. "Look out! Look out! Stop her! Back her!"

Boone smashed the glass with his pistol butt, and thrust the weapon through. But the man at the wheel had pulled open the door, and was running aft. He dashed around and into the wheel-house. The pilot lay on the floor, blood trickling from his head. As his hand fell on the wheel the deck seemed to slide from under his feet. There was a mighty lurch, a jarring in every timber. He was flung against a transom seat. The shrieking of a woman

in the cabin and the trampling and shouting forward suddenly ceased. Then came a cry, — a cry which pierced the ears and set every nerve quivering, — the yelp of a dog magnified a hundredfold. Boone was to hear it many times afterward, and each time it made his heart jump. No genius first gave the rebel yell, but it remains the fiercest cry that comes from human throat.

He pulled himself to his feet, his head throbbing, and stood by the window, staring forward and below him. The engines had stopped. The bow of the steamer was high up, her nose almost against the bank. The bank was lined with men. Most of them with ragged beards and sallow faces, clad in butternut, a few in uniform of the Confederate cavalry. All of them were armed. Into the faces of the Union officers gathered at the rail gaped the muzzle of a six-pound gun. Behind all, the thick woods from which the surprise had been sprung.

There had been more than one case of piracy by guerillas, but this one, Boone believed, had a bigger purpose. The paymaster's funds were aboard, but it was something else they sought. Rawlins's warnings flashed on him. He believed he knew why it was that the tall, dashing fellow in wide hat and high, mud-splashed boots gazed so hard from the bank at the knot of Union officers on the steamer's deck. And, if he was right in this, Boone told himself there was to be a disappointment. For,

miles down the river, about this time, the Captain was in a room that overlooked the levee of a dirty little town, busy with his correspondence.

The Confederates began to clamber aboard. A little huddle of frightened passengers awaited them, a cry now and then coming from the women. It was all over so far as doing anything for the *Platte Valley* or what she carried. Boone gave a glance to the pilot of the steamer lying on the floor and beginning to moan, then slipped out of the house and crawled swiftly aft, and so to the deck below. From up the engine-room companionways poured the engineers and stokers. The cabins were unlighted and deserted. No, not quite deserted. There was one. Boone, with a stab of reproach, remembering her, turned into the nearest door and came upon her, standing alone in the dusk.

"Beatrix," he said.

"Oh!" she cried, "what are you here for?"

"To be with you," he answered, simply. "They have taken the steamer."

"Then go!" she said. "Go! I am not alone. Philip is with me. Go! Go!"

"Philip is not here."

"He has gone forward. He will come back at once. I am in no danger. Besides" — the entreaty fled from her face — "I am a Southern woman. These are Southern soldiers. I do not need your protection."

"But I will stay," he said, "until your cousin comes."

"Then it will be too late," she cried. "You must go now. Go, I tell you! I do not want you, do you understand?"

He did not answer. Some one was coming along the deck. A voice called, "In here?"

"You *must* understand," she said, swiftly, and ran to the doorway. Against the western sky her figure and the figures of the two men who faced her stood out clearly. One of them was her cousin. The other, the tall man in high boots who had been on the bank, now with his hat off and a hand held out, cried her name. And Boone knew him, and for a moment stood unnoticed in the dimness of the cabin, then slipped away, caring little which way he went.

She had told him to go. Where? He looked across the river. It was too wide to swim. And a hundred feet of water ran between him and the nearer shore. The bank was lined with his enemies. If he trusted himself to the open water they would pick him off at their leisure as he swam. Then a wrathful stubbornness not to be taken rose in him; and, almost at his feet, he saw a chance of escape.

A rope fender hung over the side of the steamer. He slipped between the rails, caught the rope with his feet, and slid down. As his head passed under the top rail, his cap was brushed off and fell on the

deck. It was leaving dangerous evidence behind. At the same moment he saw Beatrix again. She was standing in the gangway. She faced the two men, and he was almost sure she saw him. But as his feet entered the water he heard the sound of footsteps above, and lowered himself until only his chin was above water. The current sucked him close to the steamer's side. The bend of the hull where it tumbled into the stern hid him from above. So he clung to the trailing end of the rope, and floated.

He heard men passing and repassing on the deck. They shouted to one another and called to the banks. Once there was a yell of triumph. The paymaster's funds! Half an hour went by. He was growing stiff, the water was icy cold, a breeze played over his shoulders. The noise subsided.

Then abruptly a voice. The speaker halted above him. He should be on the very spot where the cap lay. Boone waited for a sign of its discovery. But none came. A woman spoke, and he knew it was Beatrix. "If you wait here, they never will find him."

A man's voice in reply. Boone knew it instantly. "I reckon they'll pull him out. Give them time. I will stay here, if you'll allow me."

"Oh, certainly, if you wish. But it will soon be dark. This terrible Captain may give you the slip."

A laugh. "Don't worry. We have him on the boat. My men will find him."

Beatrix answered, "You talk as if it did not matter whether you caught him or not. I have heard it said that it would be as good as winning a battle to capture him."

"So it will be. We have been waiting a long time. The chance only came to-day. We got word from Cairo he would go up this afternoon. I was ordered out. That is the wonderful part of it. You — coming on the same steamer. It almost seems — "

"As if it was not as simple as it really is? You are mistaken. It is very commonplace. Philip was going to St. Louis. I had made a promise to go there. This way suited me best. So I took the first steamer which was sailing. I reckon you can make nothing wonderful out of that. And, if I had known this would happen — "

"You wouldn't have come on her, Beatrix?"

"Why should I? I wish to get to St. Louis. And the hours I have spent since we left Cairo — stared at by Yankee officers! Ugh! It has been detestable."

"They will not stare at you again for some time to come," he remarked.

"But here I am!" she said, angrily. "You do not seem to think of that. And I must ride — I don't know how far — to go on."

"Beatrix." He repeated her name and again, "Beatrix, can't you give a little while to me? It is two months since I saw you."

"So long, Major Carson. Now, I reckon you're wrong."

There was a ripple in the water at their feet, but the Mississippi is a mighty stream and keeps its secrets to itself when it wills. The man who rested on its breast loosed his clutch to float away. But he looked across, and he saw that the twilight lay on the surface of the river. And he meant to live.

Above him there were reproaches, recollections. "I am not wrong. It was a Sunday — the last in August. It was at church in Vicksburg. Afterward we walked along Open Woods Street, under the china-trees. We were alone. Don't you remember? I rode away that afternoon." Then, after a wait, "You do remember, Beatrix. I asked you something. You said you would answer me when I came back. I am going away again in a few minutes. I have waited a long time — won't you tell me what I want?"

Suddenly a third voice spoke from close at hand. Boone recognised Philip's voice. "Oh, here you are! I've been looking for you. We must be off, Beatrix. I have borrowed a couple of horses. Your brigadier is not on board, Carson."

"Not on board?"

"No. Your men have searched everywhere.

Anyhow, I do not think he is the sort of man to hide to be pulled out. Those Union officers are laughing at you. They say he never came aboard."

"It seems you are not a success at this sort of thing," Beatrix remarked.

"That is not fair," Carson protested. "He *is* on board. You must have seen him."

"On the contrary," she answered, "I did not see him after we started. I agree with the Yankees you captured. He didn't come on board. You had a man on the steamer, — the one who ran us aground. Why didn't he tell you?"

"He did," returned Carson, quickly. "He said he saw him at the levee, coming aboard. If he is not here, he got off because he was warned."

"Warned?" she laughed. "Is that your excuse? Then why did his officers come? And who was to warn him, Philip? I? We neither of us knew of your plan, thanking you for the compliment, Major."

Suddenly Philip struck a hand on the rail. "But there was another officer on board!" he cried. "Hadley! We have all the rest. He must be on the steamer. There is no chance to escape with that light on the river. Stay here, Carson, I know him. We'll find him yet." Boone heard him run along the deck forward. Then there was silence except for the calls of the men from the bank and

on the steamer, and the murmur of the stream. Darkness was settling on the river.

Presently Carson spoke. "Boone Hadley was on the boat with you. You saw him, and he spoke to you. You helped him to escape."

"Major Carson!" proudly.

"Forgive me. I did not mean that. But you did see him. Ah, Beatrix! I thought —" His voice died away. Then he said steadily, and it was almost in Boone's heart to pity him, "Beatrix, be honest with me. Is it still — the same way?"

Boone heard her laugh, though it was very faint. "Do you reckon I could be in love with a Yankee! I would not give that for him!"

Something fell from the deck into the water and floated to Boone's hand. It was his cap.

XV

THICKER THAN WATER

THREE days later when Boone landed at Cairo from a down-river steamer, there was an interview with the Captain at which no one else was present. The *Platte Valley* had pulled off, minus eight Union officers and her gold. The tale of her seizure travelled piecemeal to headquarters. Boone's report was succinct and strictly official. A few days later a surprise. For important services rendered at various times, a recommendation for an advance in grade for him was to be forwarded to St. Louis. For capacity and because the need was pressing, a place awaited him on the staff and was to be filled within a week. Boone's astounded thanks were silenced with a curt order to report his arrival immediately to his colonel.

As a result of the experience of the *Platte Valley,* commerce south of Girardeau was cut off. And thereby the Captain made a host of new and powerful enemies. It was his first blow at the speculators, the men who use war as a cupper uses a leech;

and they resented it. Time and time again in the next two years he learned of their enmity. A man may tread his weaknesses under foot, but those who search will always find them in the dust, and his head must be very high if they do not smirch him.

The Captain's head was not yet so high. Read the newspapers of that year of 1862 if you would learn that his name went no further than the strip of country along the Mississippi where he had command — that at St. Louis, where his chief sat, it was no more than those of a dozen in the field who made failures of the splendid campaigns of one who distrusted all who were under him.

Those who believed in the Captain saw him daily at his desk during these weeks, doing the work of three with letters, telegrams, and maps, watching the drill which seemed eternal, his uniform often discarded for the shabby long overcoat and slouch-hat and boots which were not, but might well have been, the coat and hat and boots of Gravois and Galena days.

There were others, too, who slowly were learning his worth. Among them the correspondents of the papers which sought to undo what he was trying to accomplish. "The truth," he told them, "always has the right of way." So Rawlins swore and obeyed, and the men who carried their despatches to him for approval smiled, but looked with new respect

on the square-shouldered officer with the brown beard and sober face, who talked little, but talked always to the point.

It was Halleck's order that the army should harbour no fugitive slaves. The Captain carried out the order. But he went no further. The army, he made it understood, was not to be used to hunt out and return these slaves. Then up rose the owners of fugitive negroes along the Mississippi banks, and with them the army contractors who found their cheating stopped. And the Captain heard and was silent while they worked with might and main to destroy him with stories of his tyranny and worse.

In consequence of which David had a difficult letter to write.

From St. Louis had come orders to make a big demonstration in Western Kentucky. The story went around that this was only the advance move in a campaign which would bring thirty thousand soldiers from Missouri. Cairo was thronged with correspondents. They understood it was to be a rapid march and a hard one. They made a formal demand on headquarters for horses for their personal use. Rawlins answered that the Captain didn't keep a livery-stable. To which the same gentleman who had once drawn such a remarkable picture of the Captain returned, drily, "Well, he might as well

keep one. There are asses enough around headquarters."

But these were but the amenities of camp life. When Rawlins related the incident, and in picturesque vernacular described how he would punish such insolence, the Captain laughed. "Take it easy, Rawlins. It was 'asses,' not an 'ass,' remember."

The Captain had weightier business than resenting hot words. The expedition started through a slough of Kentucky mud. Would-be sutlers and contractors swarmed about headquarters persistently. One evening after a hard day's march the Captain called David into the house which had been made headquarters. He had received an application, he said, to supply fodder. He wished it answered. "The application came the day we started," he said. "I held it over. But I can't give the contract, and I want you to explain just why I can't. It's from Gravois, and I like to show them up there that I haven't forgotten my neighbours. Answer it to-night." He handed David the letter. It was signed Felix Mayhew.

David read it. There were very good reasons which he knew, and the Captain did not, why it was not easy for him to write the reply as ordered. He had been struggling with pen and paper for half an hour when Boone entered. "Drop that and join us," he said.

"I can't," answered David. "I'm very busy here with a letter."

"A letter? So it is!" Boone feigned to see it for the first time. He pursed his lips.

David flushed. "It's an official letter. One from headquarters. Get out, I'm busy."

"Oh, come on," urged Boone. "Finish it to-night. You'll put your eyes out."

"I'm bound to stay here," returned David, and bent over his work. It was late when the letter was finished. Its writer, turning in, found Boone already asleep.

The next morning there was trouble in camp. The woman of the house which had been made headquarters reported to the Captain that her beehives had been robbed in the night. She had come upon one of the thieves running away. She would not be able to identify him because of the darkness, but she had demanded which regiment he came from, and he had answered, "The Twenty-second Illinois."

The Captain was wroth. The regiment was drawn up. The regulations against taking private property were read to it. Boone was ordered to make an address. And so he did, reluctantly, but eloquently. The Captain, he told them, was deeply grieved by the occurrence. The Twenty-second had distinguished itself in battle. It was regarded as a regiment of soldiers. Petty stealing was beneath

soldiers. The offence could not be passed over. An example must be made. As the guilty persons could not be singled out, a fine of five dollars was imposed on each officer of the regiment and a fine of one dollar on each private. The regiment received its sentence in silence. Then the order to march was given, and the regiment started.

But a little later, when the Captain rode to the front and passed the Twenty-second, not a cheer was given. Hardly was he out of hearing when a singsong chant began:

"*Who stole the honey?*"

Five hundred voices in unison declared it was stolen by the Captain's staff.

"*Who ate the honey?*" demanded the chorus.

Again the reply, "It was the Captain's staff."

"*But who had to pay for the honey?*" wailed the chorus.

"*The Twenty-second Illinois,*" groaned every man.

David turned to Boone. "Hear that?"

Boone nodded. "And it's the truth," he said, sadly.

"What?".

"Yes. The staff stole that honey, last night. I was the fellow the old woman caught. And I *was* 'of the Twenty-second' — lately. Now I've got to square it with the Captain. And oh, Lord! it was poor honey."

What the Captain said is not on record. But the fines were not collected, and Boone was in disgrace for a month.

That great Kentucky campaign will be remembered by the campaigners chiefly for its record of mud, — yellow mud, black mud, red, sticky mud — and rains. In a week the expedition was back at Cairo. That was all there was to it. But the march settled one thing for the Captain. He determined to have that point on the Ohio River which months before he had told David they should control. But first he must take the two big forts which watched it on the south from twin rivers. So he went to St. Louis to try to persuade Halleck to this plan, and took David with him.

But the military genius at St. Louis who presided over the destinies of those western forces was not easy to see, and often less easy to deal with when seen. While the Captain waited on his decision David went to Gravois.

As he rode into the settlement it satisfied him at first to look at the country-side and recognise the houses which stood out boldly on the ridges, in the winter landscape of a bleak day. It was very good to see them all again. It had been years since he last saw the place,— the years which are a month on the calendar, but which those who are away from the spot they love count as years.

He was passing Colonel Marshall's when one of

the house servants overtook him, and handed him a note. It was in Kitty's handwriting. "Yes, I am at home," it ran. "And so glad you came to see me. Jackson will take your horse."

What was there for David to do? He rode up the avenue, and, if a trace of disappointment at his summary invitation lingered with him, Kitty's welcome dissipated it. "You see," she said, "I saw you coming along the road. It was earlier than I had expected you and I was afraid you might think I was not ready to receive you, and ride on. So — I'm glad you came."

"Kitty," he said, sadly, "I see no change. It is time you were learning."

"Respect for you? How can you expect it? I knew you, David, before you put on a uniform. I never feared you but once. The day you were having such a hard time with that new gun at the Barracks' camp."

"That is quite a long time back," he remarked. "A good many things have happened since then."

"For instance?"

"Oswald's new commission." David was wise in his generation. Her face glowed. Had he heard how Oswald earned the promotion? It was this way. David listened with interest. He had had the impression till now that Oswald was not alone in the action concerned, but his understanding was plainly at fault. Oswald was in imminent danger

of being made a brigadier. So the story ran, and he did not interrupt. But presently she offered him the opportunity to ask, "And your father is still in Virginia?"

She nodded. "He has been home once. He tried to take some one away with him when he went back. Guess who."

David could not. "The Doctor," she said. "Father was with him a good deal. But the Doctor would not go yet. You can understand why?"

"I think I can. And he should not go. The army is the last place for him."

"So Aunt Sarah told him. But that was only one of the reasons she gave. Oh, Aunt Sarah worked hard the moment she saw what was in the wind. And father never suspected till the last that his plans were being undermined by her. When he did! Well, David, I think you know father and Aunt Sarah. The crisis came right here. The Doctor was come to supper with Lee, and father had been out of the room a few minutes. When he came back!" — Kitty cast her eyes to the ceiling. "Lee and I were up-stairs," she explained. "We ran down as fast as we could. But really, David, I expected to find the Doctor pulled apart, and father taking the Confederate half of him out the door, while Aunt Sarah held fast to her share."

David smiled, but it was with the Doctor himself that his thought was busy. To Colonel Marshall

and to Miss Sarah Pinckney, those two bitter disputants, all was plain. For the Doctor, he was sure, there had been hours of suffering because he could not see his way, of which they never guessed.

"I have told you something," said Kitty, stiffly. "I will repeat it if you did not hear."

David asked her pardon. "The fact is —" he went on.

"The fact is," she broke in, severely, "you are wondering how much longer it will be till you can politely say good-bye. I will help you. Tell Lee I sent you with my compliments. You are so stupid."

David rose. "All right," he said. "If you put me out I must go. But I shall leave this with you. It is only fair." He laid the note which the servant had given him on the arm of the chair. "I am 'so stupid,'" he added. "I might —"

"What?" She twisted the note in her fingers.

"Send it to Oswald."

Her fingers suddenly were still. "David, I want you to promise me that you won't mention this note," she said, with much concern.

He laughed. "Why, of course, I won't." And then, if it had not been that he was doing what she asked, he would have sworn that she looked disappointed.

But as he galloped along the Gravois road and under the elms which now waved bare branches

over the driveway to the big white house he was not concerning himself with reflections on Miss Marshall's conduct. A curious anticipation took hold of him, when he was ushered into the library and found himself in the company of those familiar rows of book-shelves. It may have been vexation at the time he had lost.

But, David, was it vexation on your face when a white hand lifted the curtain in the doorway and she was standing there? Where was your military bearing fled when she stepped but one pace toward you and made that deep curtsy? How was it that the greeting, "Good evening, Captain," wrought confusion in your countenance? It was spoken with sobriety. You had been addressed that way for many weeks.

Yet you halted in your reply. You knew you did and were not ashamed. Perhaps there was a friendly message in the hands she laid in yours which made you forget so quickly that this was an enemy to your cause. However this may have been, a winter evening had never fallen more quickly. There were many things to hear.

There was the intelligence that the Captain had nearly been captured on a Mississippi steamer. How had she heard that?

"Why, from Beatrix, to be sure," she answered. "You knew she had been here?"

"No, I didn't know," he answered. "When?"

"Two months ago now. They came up part way by the river."

"They?"

"Captain Randolph," she said, slowly, and then laughing, "How ridiculous that sounds. 'Philip,' of course."

Of course. What was there in the words which made him repeat them to himself? He did not reply, and she went on, "They came up on that visit which Beatrix had promised to make. You remember I wrote you that she said she would come. She went right through the Union lines, too, as she declared she would. But — Well, she could not come alone. So Philip came with her, of course."

Again that *"of course."* It was so distinctly irritating that David frowned. But he acquiesced, "I remember now. So she carried out her threat. I wish I had seen her. How long was she here?"

"More than two weeks. But Philip was here only a week. You see there was some danger that he might be —" She paused. "I forgot you were a Yankee officer," she explained. "I shall tell you no more secrets."

He answered, stiffly, "No, you had better not if they *are* secrets. And Mr. Randolph —"

"*Captain* Randolph."

"*Captain* Randolph would be wise not to try to come North again. It *is* dangerous. Something might happen." He was gazing moodily into the

fire, and she regarded him unnoticed. "David," she said, at last, "Philip likes you. He told me of something you did at Belmont. How is it I never heard of it before?"

"What was it?"

"It was something you did for the Captain. Philip said it was about as brave a thing as he had ever seen, and he would like to shake your hand for it."

His face burned now. "Oh, that! It wasn't anything after all," he said, bluntly. "I didn't have time to think it out. But what he did! That was different. It was fine." Then, noticing her puzzled brows, "You knew that he was the man who didn't fire at us when he had the chance?"

"No," she said, quietly. "He did not tell me that." Her eyes were glistening. "David," she added, "you two should be friends."

"Well, I reckon we are," he declared. "That is, I am his friend as much as any one who is for the Union could be just now."

"Is it that way even with *you?* Are we all your enemies and you ours because—" She threw out a hand. "Oh, how I hate this war!" she cried. "How I hate it! You don't know. You haven't been here. Always some one must be going to fight — to die. And the others — the ones who stay at home — they — they break their hearts."

The Doctor's step in the hallway made her put a

quick finger to her lips. Then her hand brushed her eyes, and she called, "In here, father!"

"Why, David!" the Doctor exclaimed. "I never thought of seeing you soon again. It is a night for my dry Catawba. How are you?" He grasped both of David's hands and took a long look at him.

But for all the heartiness of this greeting there was something changed. It was in his bearing, in his speech, yet David could not then say what it was. When they were at the table the truth came upon him suddenly. Twice he caught the Doctor's eyes fastened on his uniform with a strange look, and, puzzling over this, suddenly recognised something in the lapel of the Doctor's black coat, and understood. A bit of ribbon — the colours of the new Confederacy.

The Doctor saw him stare at it. When they were alone a few minutes later, he said, almost defiantly, "Yes, David, — I had no choice. I was born and raised in the South. It was bound to come. One can't tear out one's heart!"

David, regarding the slender, bowed figure, noted with what new brilliancy the eyes sparkled behind the glasses. "Are you — going?" he asked.

"Not now, not now. Not till I must. Lee would be alone. And I couldn't expect — to last long."

"Anyhow, there are younger men. And you — "

"I am not too old to be of service to my

South," the Doctor hastened to say. "When the time comes, and they need me, I will go."

"But Lee!"

The Doctor's fingers played tremblingly with a button of his waistcoat. "No, no," he said. "You must not put it that way. I can never forget her. I am an old man, David, in some ways I am very old. Everything is behind me except — her. Do you think then that I could forget her? Do you think I would say yes, if there was anything else for me to say?"

"No," David answered, after a little silence. "No." He covered the Doctor's hand with both of his own.

In his heart, on his lips it was to speak of a promise which he had given long ago, and to say that wherever he might be, whatever might happen, she would always have one to whom she might turn. But on the lapel of the black coat was a bit of bright ribbon to remind him that between them had fallen the shadow of a figure with a sword. With that before him what were the words into which he could put his compassion? If it were not for himself and for others, this anguish of an old man might never have been. When he went away, only the long, close grasp of his fingers had spoken for him.

But it may be the Doctor remembered the promise and understood. He went with David to the door,

and watched him mount and ride away. Lee, a hand on her father's shoulder, called, "Good-bye, David! Good-bye, *Captain!*" and the Doctor fancied something made her press a little closer to him. He put an arm about her. They walked inside, hand in hand. There she slipped from him quickly and to the fire where she stood looking down and saying nothing. When she came over to say good night, he held his arms open for her, and nestled his cheek against her head. His fingers patted the curls with little, gentle touches, and after a moment he said, "We two have been together a good many years, dear."

"Why, yes, father." She lifted her face and kissed him. Her arms clung to his neck. "Yes, yes, yes," she repeated, and each time she spoke the word more slowly. Then she put a hand on either side of his face and looked at him with brave eyes, a smile upon her quivering lips. "But not nearly so many years as we will be together," she told him.

"I hope so, if you are happy. But it might be—" He paused, then spoke one word—"David?" and waited.

"David," she answered. "We have known him a long time—as long as I remember. And I have been happy, very happy, you know that." Suddenly she drew her hands away and slipped from the room.

XVI

Donelson

A ROUND moon sailed above the Tennessee hills and struck black shadows from the tree-trunks on a ridge. It whitened the face of a man sleeping below. It sifted through the withered leaves of a bush near by and crept beneath the hat-brim of another sleeper. It gleamed on the bayonet of a gun and picked out a sword scabbard propped against a log. Its beams travelled to the south along the crest of that ridge and the next and the next until they glimmered in the bosom of a winding river. It travelled to the north along the ridges until it reached the river again. Under every tree and bush and in the open it bathed the figures stretched upon the ground, and glinted on musket, bayonet, and sword, and burnished the cannon masked by rocky ledges and piles of earth.

Fifteen thousand men lay on the semicircle of these ridges, at their feet a breadth of broken land, stripped of trees. On the other side of this middle ground and opposite the lines rose a steep slope.

Crowned it a massive fort, a necklace of rifle-pits and barriers of pointed tree-trunks and branches flung about its shoulders. In the fort and in those curving ugly trenches of freshly turned clay lay twenty thousand more men. And the moon looked down on them, and bathed their gray coats as softly as it had the men in blue. A shell fled shrieking overhead and now and then a word passed along the line of sleepy men who watched on either side. Then there was silence again.

Behind one of the ridges a man sat in the room of a farmhouse, and smoked, and studied a map. His head ached and he frowned at the messages which came to him from the north and the west. A device of gold braid shone on his shoulder-straps. At his word on the next day the fifteen thousand were to rise and fall on the twenty thousand a mile away. Lightnings had played across that mile of broken ground the day before. The soil had been pressed by hurrying feet, when the night came, — the night of St. Valentine's Day, and the hospital shelters were full, and the twenty thousand were in their zigzag trenches at the foot of the slope and on the side and in the fort at its top. And the fifteen thousand stretched themselves on the ridges and forgot the day. Then came the frost, and the wounded who had not been found, froze, and the sleepers huddled their knees and rolled back to back, and knew that it was very cold.

The man in the overcoat folded the map and put it away. Then he wrote a message. "Take it to Commodore Foote," he said. "Report when the men are off the boats."

David took the message and rode to the north. The road was harrowed with ruts, stiff as iron. A gale swept across the river, the spits of snow cut like a lash. As he crossed the highway to Fort Henry, which the Captain had captured one week before, Donelson's grim shape loomed through the darkness. Fort Henry had been a matter of an hour and a half and the pounding of the heavy guns of the fleet. Donelson was a bigger task. "We must have it," the Captain had said on the day Fort Henry surrendered. "I don't know how strong it is, but I believe we can take it. And fifteen thousand men against it now are as good as fifty thousand a month hence."

From St. Louis came an order. "Hold on to Fort Henry, and intrench. Picks and shovels are on the way." When this order reached the Captain he was in front of Donelson, and the guns and muskets were speaking for them. David's lips twisted at the recollection. The Captain could not drive slaves at Gravois. But this was war, and he had a faculty of moving swiftly in the field and doing things as soon as he made up his mind that they should be done.

Abruptly the river broke into view. It was a

flat place and swarmed with men. They formed from the steamers, muskets at a slope, and marched off in the darkness, south. He had passed many of them on the road. The gunboats lay out on the river, — six great turtles sheathed with iron. He went aboard the headquarters boat, and found the commodore, — a man with a square head, and open eyes, and strong nose, a fringe of whiskers about cheek-bones and chin. A face that might have been carved out of a board, yet with a promise of purpose in the mouth and of thought in the eyes which furnished excuse for the name, "Deacon."

Boone had nicknamed him that. He had been sent to him at Cairo and was with him there for two days. "I went to church there with him," Boone related. "The minister didn't arrive. The commodore waited awhile, then he stepped into the pulpit. And he preached us a sermon. Such a sermon! I tell you it came right out of his heart, and went into ours. Some of them laugh at him, but he's got the right kind of Christianity for me. We had a blessing at every meal on his boat. It wasn't long, but it was straight out. He fights the same way. When the rebel Tilghman came aboard to give up his sword at Fort Henry, the commodore told him he did the right thing. 'But I would not have surrendered to you. I'd have gone to the bottom first,' he said."

David delivered his orders. The commodore

read them and immediately inquired about the Captain's losses. "Too bad, too bad," he said. "Poor fellows! We were delayed. Some of the steamers were slow. This gale made it harder. But we will have all ashore by morning. Then we will see what our guns can do."

That afternoon David saw what they could do. It was a stand-up fight, and shells burst in the yellow trenches and shot bored the rebel earthworks. But Donelson stood. A rain of iron poured on the metal-backed turtles and drilled their bodies and dismounted their guns. They drifted down the stream. At midnight the commodore sent a message to the Captain, "Won't you come aboard as soon as you can? I am disabled and cannot come to you."

The Captain came, spattered with mud, chewing a cigar, but with a face unperturbed. "You've had some rough handling," he said. "You've had your personal share of it, too, by the looks of things. We'll have to give up the attack from the river."

After a few minutes' consultation he turned to David. "I will start back at once."

A cold light was creeping over the hills to the east, and the chill mists writhed in the morning breeze. It was very still. They rode slowly. Suddenly the Captain pulled up his horse. A sullen boom echoed from the banks ahead. Then came another roar and another. The horses plunged for-

ward together on the rough road. A mile passed, and a horseman shot around the bend ahead. Boone had ridden hard. "They are attacking us on the right," he cried. The Captain's yellow horse rushed past him as he spoke, and Boone and David spurred behind him for the rest of the way. The guns shook the air more heavily, but as they crossed the creek at headquarters the thunder of these ceased, and only a crackling fire from distant points marked the places of attacks.

Round the curving front of the Union forces the Captain rode, his eyes sweeping each position, satisfied with what he saw until he reached that point on the right where the line drew close to the river. There was confusion, broken ranks; the signs of doubt and fear and panic almost were plain to any one. A little knot of men leaned on muskets near where the yellow horse came to a standstill, his flanks heaving, his head sunk. The Captain heard their talk: "We are beaten. They have come out to fight as long as there is any light to fight by. They've got their knapsacks on, and they're filled."

The Captain spoke. "How do you know that?"

A soldier replied, "We've taken prisoners. I saw one of their knapsacks. It was full of grub."

"Bring me a couple."

He opened a knapsack and spilled its contents; another and did the same. "They *are* filled," he said. His eyes gleamed. He turned on the nearest

officer — it was the commander at that point. He spoke so that all about him could hear. "Men who are defending a fort don't carry three days' rations on their back. They are trying to cut their way out. Whoever attacks now will whip. Be ready!"

The yellow horse swung round and galloped back along the front. Its rider's voice rang out as he passed each command, "We will attack at once. The enemy is trying to escape."

David, Boone, staff-officers, aides, rode swiftly up and down, and the word was passed. The lines of blue reformed. They advanced. A red gush of fire tinted the mists which still hung in places. An answering flash leaped from the fort. The lightnings played, and more fiercely now, from ridge to ridge, and level sheets of flame streamed from the banks of clay upon the slope. The thunders rolled; a million pieces of tinware crashed to the ground at once. A man cried out and withered at the knees to flatten in a limp heap. Another stopped abruptly with his musket stiffly raised, then fell full length. A gap opened in the line of blue, and closed again. A dozen men fled, and, knocking them aside, trampling them under foot, a score of others plunged into the clouds of yellow smoke which spread a canopy above the batteries on either side and rolled on to the lower ground, biting the tongue, choking the throat, blinding the men who struggled for-

ward and were beaten back. But the blue line won ground.

At last night came and hung a curtain between, and the moon's white fingers stole over the faces of men who slept. Some of them stirred at the cool touch and parted cracking lips and moaned. Some did not move and stared at the skies. In the eyes of these was eternal peace.

That night within Donelson a traitor and a weak man showed their colours, and a brave man proved his bravery by mercy. A war council had been called. Buckner was there, a veteran of the Mexican war; Floyd was there, that Secretary of War who had crippled his country, as he thought, before he told Buchanan that he would be Secretary of War no longer; Pillow was there, who grew an inch taller each time he reflected on his military services. Another man was there, but he was not consulted: a tall, bearded man, the hardest rider, the best bulldog in the rebel army, as shrewd in war as he was ignorant in letters, — Forrest, the raider.

Floyd was the senior in command. "The fort must be surrendered," he said. "But I cannot do it. I stand peculiarly toward the government at Washington. I turn the command over to General Pillow."

The delicate honour so conveyed pricked the

bubble of Pillow's conceit. "I must decline," he declared. "My relations with the Federal government would interfere with anything which was to be done. General Buckner should command."

Simon B. Buckner was of fighting breed. He did not say much. Pillow asked, "I may go now?"

"Yes," answered the Kentuckian. "And you had better lose no time."

Forrest's eye lightened. "What are you going to do?"

"Surrender. We must do that in the end. I am not willing to shed more blood uselessly."

"I thought it was to be — fight," said Forrest. "If it isn't, I wish to get out with my command."

Buckner told him he had permission to do so, and the cavalryman strode from the room.

A little before daylight a darkey was brought to the Union headquarters, a deserter from the fort. Headquarters was a cabin on the left of the front. It snowed hard in squalls that night and the wind whistled through the cracks in the shanty wall. The Captain, his back propped against a post, had pulled his hat down and turned the collar of his coat up; and by these signs tried to believe that he was warm. His brain ached with the noise and strain of the day's fighting, his head, sunk between his shoulders, made them think that he was asleep when they brought the deserter in. But in an

instant he had straightened his back, and kicked the smouldering log into a blaze. He listened to the story.

Donelson, so the deserter said, was being evacuated. General Floyd and General Pillow already had escaped on steamers with ten thousand men (it was three thousand) and gone down the river (it was up). General Forrest was starting to cut his way out along the river-bank to the south — with five thousand more (it was a thousand). But the darkey tried to tell the truth. The Captain looked at him with eyes which were danger lamps. "We will hang you if you are lying," he said.

"Dat's so, Gen'ral," was the answer. "I'se tol' de truf. Dey's been 'scapin' all night."

"Rawlins," the Captain said, "we will trust him. Warn McClernand to stop Forrest if he can. Send word to Smith to attack at dawn, and the rest to assault at the sound of the first gun."

So Boone posted hard for McClernand and the right, and having delivered his message rode on along the curving line of the Union front, carrying the warning; and so at last, in a spirit of adventure, came out beyond the furthest picket, a quarter of a mile from where the river glimmered ghostlike through the falling snow.

The back water, black and forbidding, crusted with ice, spread inland to the north. Across it he could faintly see the firmer ground of a slope, sprin-

kled with trees and bushes. Still and deserted it all was, and war seemed very far from the spot. As he surveyed it a dull continuous drumming grew on his hearing, and toward the river he fancied that a darker shadow crept over the watery land. A scurry of wind drove the snow down thickly and blinded him. He strained his vision, a hand over his eyes. And all at once he brought his horse's head up with a jerk and struck spurs. This should be Forrest escaping and nothing less. His mount plunged forward. It had not made a dozen strides when dark shapes suddenly rose before it, and Boone, unseated by a violent sideways leap, crashed to the ground.

He knew he was a prisoner before he realised how he came to be thrown. Astride of his horse, but with two mounted figures shrouded in gray capes on either hand, a pistol drawn on him, in ten minutes he was moving beside the long, winding column of cavalry to near its head, where rode a tall man, his booted legs braced forward, the closely buttoned overcoat, belted at the waist to hold a brace of long revolvers and a heavy sabre, showing the lines of his powerful figure. His waving black hair under the soft hat and his cropped chin-beard and moustache were frozen in stiff locks, his sallow face was stung by the cold to a brick red. He beat his gauntleted hands together, and from beneath shaggy brows bent a look on Boone. His voice was

harsh, "Take him to the rear. If he tries to run, cut him down. No shooting." It was Forrest in an hour of danger and decision.

There was no time and no need for words. The important fact was he was travelling south and with a first-rate chance of seeing all that was to be seen of the world for weeks, perhaps for months, through the barred window of a Confederate prison. Curiously enough the thought which insisted on interesting him most was, how Rawlins would swear at the —— —— idiot who called himself a staff-officer and let the —— —— —— rebels make a prisoner of him!

Three miles behind Boone at that hour, on a cracker-box turned upside down, a thick-set man shivered in the cold and by the gray light of dawn read a letter which had just been handed him, then passed it to the officer who stood beside him. "What do you think of that?" he asked.

"I would not consent to an armistice. They will surrender anyhow."

The Captain nodded. And with his knee for a desk he wrote a brief note. In it were these words: *"No terms except an unconditional and immediate surrender can be accepted. I propose to move immediately upon your works."*

Two hours later a good-looking, stout man with broad, low brow and gray hair, moustache, and whis-

kers sat at one side of a breakfast-table in Donelson. He was resplendent in a uniform of blue and gold. A black hat, with curling plume, was carefully laid on a near-by chair. This was Gen. S. B. Buckner, C. S. A. Opposite to him sat a short man of middle height with a plain face in which the only noticeable features were the very tired but determined gray-blue eyes, and a square jaw which even the uneven beard of brown did not hide. His uniform was a soldier's cape overcoat, which was tossed over the back of a chair. He wore a suit of blue which looked suspiciously as if it had been slept in.

"If I had been in command in the fort from the first," said the stout gentleman, "we would never have surrendered like this."

"No," answered the plain man. "In that case, I would have had to wait. But I would have taken the fort in the end just the same."

XVII

What a Lame Man Did

HOW sagely the Doctor arranged it all! "Lee," he said, "I think you had better go down and see Old Betty. She is complaining sorely this morning, and can hardly turn in bed. Perhaps you can comfort her, poor soul."

Lee said she would go, of course, at once. She lowered the paper she was reading. It gave the first news of Shiloh, which set it forth there as a victory for the South. There was a list of the dead and wounded so far as known. The little double rank of names left dreadful doubts. The paper was folded carefully, so that half a minute passed before she turned to leave the room. In that time she noted two things. Her father continued to repeat hurriedly the particulars of Old Betty's condition, and all the while his back remained steadily turned. She understood, and her heart choked her. For weeks she had refused to acknowledge the inevitable truth. Now it was upon her. She looked back for an instant from the doorway. He

was bending over a table. "Lee," he said, in a low voice. She did not answer. She knew that he wished to learn if she had really gone; he was afraid to turn about until she had.

Down the path to the quarter she walked slowly through the rain. From the direction of the river rolled banks of low-lying clouds, and the earth steamed and sent up its own thick mist. Suddenly out of this obscurity came the gaunt person of 'Lias. He was going toward the house. "Has the Doctor sent for you?" she asked.

"Yes," he answered. "Told me to come up to the house in about five minutes."

"'Lias," she said, "he is going to tell you something which I know already, but you must not let him suspect that I know. If he does, if he seems to ask you a question, 'Lias, you must not think of me. Remember that." She passed him swiftly, and his confused question was not answered.

Old Betty was sick, very sick and querulous. "De misery's done sho' got Ole Betty dis time," she said, over and over again. "Dey ain't no use nussin' er givin' dem doctor cures." Even the presence of "Mis' Lee," and the touch of the cool hand and the cheering words of comfort which were wisely never too optimistic, failed this time to brighten the spark of determination which, for five years past, again and again had been sufficient to rekindle the lamp of a life of four score years and ten, each

time just at the moment when its possessor had decided that she "wuz done tired libbin' anyhow." So desperate did the case seem to be that Lee found in it a hope that, after all, she had not been sent away from the house for another reason besides.

But the moment she crossed the threshold of the library door and saw him seated in the big rocking-chair by the fire, she knew better. He called to her, almost as if he did not want her to hear, and she went to him. On its broad arm she leaned against him, and her cheek upon his head. She did not mean he should see her face. He needed all her help, and her face could not help him.

For a little while neither of them spoke. But Lee, your arm! How softly it pressed him! It came near to undoing all that those weeks of hard-bought silence by both of you, had enabled him to do. He felt its warmth creeping into his heart, and a voice called to him so loudly that he trembled and drew you closer a moment. Then he spoke. "There has been another battle in Tennessee."

"Yes, a great victory for the South." How quickly she said that! Perhaps he had not read its full meaning. Perhaps if he was encouraged — ? But she never deceived herself.

"They say it is a victory," he answered. "But the fighting is not over. And Shiloh is very much further south than — Donelson."

"Of course. All the battles cannot be in one place. Maybe the next one will be in Missouri."

"No," he said, and it had never been so hard to acknowledge this to himself. "The war is not coming North. It is moving into the South, and we are — losing."

"The South is only beginning to fight. It will do better soon. There are many of its men —" She stopped there, and she tried to find quickly enough the word which might carry them both over the danger-spot. But she could not, and she knew the chance was gone for ever when he said, "That is it, dear. The South has men who have not fought for it yet. It needs them — all. I am one."

Her arm tightened convulsively about his neck, and her lips pressed hard against his forehead. But she did not speak. And the arm which was about her shoulders slipped down and drew her over, over so that she lay against his breast, and he looked down into her white face and the gray misty eyes a moment, then strained her to him. Perhaps he did not say the words, but both heard them. "Lee, I must go."

Then there was another minute when she heard only his heart, and he hugged her to him, and twenty years and more were fled away, and the soft hair against which he laid his cheek seemed to be the yellow curls of a baby, and he was crooning over and over again:

"Down in the coal mines underneath the ground,
Dusky, dusky diamonds, all the year around."

Monotonous words, words strung together and little more. But eyelids had always dropped reluctantly at their bidding. And "Hush!" she was almost asleep now.

But she loosed herself gently and raised her head. She laid one hand on his shoulder. Her eyes were not clouded, only a brave little quiver at her lips. "When is it to be, father?" she asked.

"Now. To-morrow, if I can go. I have told 'Lias."

"Yes, I know. You can trust him. He will take care of me till you come back."

The sorrow of separation is of two kinds. The sorrow of the one who goes, and the sorrow of the one who is left; and of these, the sorrow of the one who is left is poignant with recollections of which the other knows nothing. There was the path winding among the orchard trees of the sunny slope behind the house, and hidden almost by the grass which bent from either side and knotted across it. More times than she could count did she stand where it began and see standing under one of the low-crooked boughs of the apple-trees the tall, slender figure with stooping shoulders, the black coat where a handkerchief hung from the pocket of its tails. She would close her eyes and say, "Father, dear,

— the handkerchief! You have forgotten again. Some day you will lose it." Did she hear him answer? She did as surely as he turned his face, smiling ruefully, "Why, so I have, sweetheart. What would I do without you?" Then they linked arms — yes, linked arms, and walked together back to the house. And there — he was gone. Then she would drop on the floor beside his chair — the high rocker with its sagging bottom of rush — and put her head down on the arm. And perhaps she was with him again. At last she would look up at the picture above the mantel-shelf with eyes bravely shining, and speak quite steadily, "I wanted you to go. Yes, I did. But you will come back. I know you will." After this Mammy Rachel often would hear her singing, and would shuffle about the kitchen, grumbling to herself. If 'Lias came in there he was sure to be set upon with a storm of reproaches and reflections upon his lack of usefulness in the human scheme, which drove him astounded and angry from the house.

Letters came back, of course. One from Nashville, another from a little town in Mississippi. After that, no letter for a month. Then one written near the Memphis and Charleston railroad. He was serving with General Sterling Price, and had been given a captain's commission. It was a long letter, and almost altogether about the country through which they were moving, and the indomitable spirit

of the men. Apparently there were no hardships. It would seem, they marched on well-kept roads, and everywhere had plenty to eat. There was sunshine, too, every day, or, when it rained it was just enough to cool the air and keep away the dust. Lee, in the scorching heat of that summer, read this again and again. It seemed to her the bravest letter ever written.

Other letters there were which she had come to expect. They were posted at all sorts of places, and came to hand often two at a time, though dated weeks apart. They glowed with the ardour of a cause. She read one of them to Kitty. It was an exchange for selected portions from a letter from Oswald. Kitty, with demure eyes, remarked, "And not a word about himself, or you?"

"Only what I have read."

"Hm. Mr. — I mean Major Randolph has changed, hasn't he?"

"I don't see that he has."

"Well, maybe not, but —" And then Kitty pursued, wickedly, "I saw him only a few times. The last time he came in disguise. And there was some danger of his being arrested if he had been caught. But, of course, the news he brought made it quite worth while. It was about the fight at some place in Kentucky, wasn't it?"

"I do not remember that he came to bring special news," said Lee, and she dared her inquisitor to go

on, with an intent gaze which would have disconcerted most persons.

Kitty carefully removed an infinitesimal speck of dust from her gown. "Oh!" she responded, and repeated "Oh!" in a tone a shade lower. Then she remarked — it appeared to be anything but apropos — "Where is David now?"

The stare was intensified. "Katherine," said Lee, quietly, "I have not heard from David for six weeks —"

"Counting from to-day?"

"You have probably noted that, in the record of my correspondence which you appear to keep. If you have not, and it is essential you should know, I will fetch his letter."

"Oh, don't bother yourself. It would probably be hard to find. I was interested only because *I* have not forgotten David."

"If you mean," said Lee, "that I *have*, you are mistaken."

Kitty rose. "My dear, whatever put that into your head? And of course Major Randolph writes of David constantly. They have interests in common."

"Nonsense," said Lee to herself, afterward, and "Nonsense," again. Philip might think what he pleased. And as for David — She shut her lips tight. She had forbidden herself to reflect on that. There was a point at which pride said no. David

was her friend, and he would always be. But Philip? There were things she wished for him. If they could be, she might — He was a gentleman always, gallant, thoughtful of her pleasure, and brave. That journey through the lines! Yes, it had been to see her. He had made no concealment of its purpose. Yet he spoke of it lightly. And, when he found that it was only to be disappointed, how gallantly he had borne himself! She had seen the light die in his face and his lip tremble, but in an instant he had given his head a toss, and said, gaily, "Now, I was most *au*-dacious, wasn't I? But I couldn't just help it, you see." And then, his eyes very tender, he had raised her hand to his lips and kissed her fingers — "But I will never give you up, dear."

XVIII

Old faces in strange places

A CROW sat on a fence and cocked its head at something beneath its perch. Then it slid to the ground and plucked at what lay there. It tugged hard and tore it loose, and flapped away with a hoarse croak of delight. From its beak dangled a frayed strip of bleached blue cloth, a tarnished brass button at the end. Even now at September's close, if one knew where to look for them, there were souvenirs to find of those two fierce days which wrote Shiloh's name among the great battles of the world, and made a graveyard of the fields and woods and bluffs which lay within the crook of the broad Tennessee and the sluggish waters of Snake Creek. Grass had grown and withered over the graves, and leaves had come and now were sailing down upon them in the autumn breeze. Six months! As many as a thousand worlds, it might be, had been blotted out in that time, and no one missed them. Shiloh was never forgotten only in the cabin of the prairie and backwoods, and in the

home in some city street where a cap of blue or gray, or a sheathed sword, perhaps, was put away, and often some one came to touch them with caressing fingers and to talk to them in the language which only the living and their dead may understand.

David had many a stirring, many a sad memory of those two days in April, but so much had happened since Donelson's fall that even Shiloh was but one of the train of events which marked the slow movement of war southward, and in which he played his part.

First had come Boone's disappearance, next, after two weeks, word of him brought by an escaped prisoner. They were taking him further south. Then, after another long wait, a letter written very fine on a piece of whitey-brown paper, crumpled and dirty. It had passed through many hands. He was well, though his quarters were narrow. "But I have company," he wrote. "Some of it welcome, though we are packed in like toy soldiers in a box. At night one of us gives the word, and we all roll over together. It is the only way. Some of the company is unwelcome. 'The wicked *flea* when no man pursueth,' was never written of this place. I hold the record. Two hundred and sixty-eight innocent lives I snuffed out in one day. But it is that, or be eaten up alive, and I yet have hopes."

The Captain said he would obtain an exchange at the first opportunity. But it was not easy, and the

weeks rolled by, and but one more letter came. David wrote many times, but there was no way of knowing that his letters ever reached Boone.

Four days after Donelson the Captain was made a major-general, and the Captain's wife with his children came to see him. Some one congratulated her on his new rank. "My husband," she replied, "has ability. He is capable of filling any position he is given. He will go much higher than this." She looked very proud and happy, and the Captain was proud and happy, too. But, as always, he showed it only in the quiet satisfaction of his voice. He swung his youngest child to his shoulders and trotted up and down. To David's vision an axe lay in the hollow of the other arm, and behind all were the oak and elm of the Gravois woods. Next came that unfortunate visit to Nashville. The Captain went to confer with General Buell. He returned from it to hear he was in disgrace with his chief for leaving his command, and inside of a month had proof of this in an order to remain where he was and place another man in charge of his expedition to Corinth.

David saw something strange the night that order came, — tears in the Captain's eyes. He saw them but once again, and that was when the news arrived of the gallant McPherson's death. But there was one who remembered the Captain's services. He was a man, they say, who never forgot. And from

Washington came word to St. Louis: "The President wishes the whole truth." The whole truth was that the Captain was doing his duty in his own fashion — straightforwardly, determinedly. Even St. Louis could not deny this when pressed.

So the Captain was restored to his own again. And in the very nick of time. North like a hawk came the Confederate leader, Albert Sydney Johnston, and with him Beauregard, who promised his men, that Saturday in April, that next day he would water his horse in the Tennessee or in hell; Hardee, low-browed and heavy, who had arranged the rules by which the game of war was supposed to be played; and Bragg, shambling and shaggy, with a temper always on the raw edge; and others beside; — forty thousand men under them.

One Sunday morning, fair and balmy, the Captain sat down to breakfast, and had scarcely broken a cracker when he was on his feet. The earth trembled.

"Where is it?"

"Pittsburg Landing, I believe," he answered. "We must go at once." He hobbled to his horse — the night before they had cut his boot from his foot after a bad fall — and up the river they went on a steamer at full speed. A cigar revolved in the Captain's mouth without pause, but his face was impassive. He said little. At one place the steamer's speed slackened. A general was there on a boat

anchored in the stream. It was Lew Wallace. He saluted. "Have your men ready to march at a moment's order," called the Captain. The steamer forged ahead.

The roar and quaking of the earth swelled. Now they were at the Landing, and before the gang plank fell, the yellow horse had taken the gap of water in its stride, and, riding low, the Captain shot up the rocky wooded slope and away, away to where the smoke billowed in clouds and a trail of bullets swept every open space among the trees. While Sherman, a bear at bay, swung round on the spot he claimed as his own, showing always his teeth, and would not budge though his enemies, circling about him, charged him and stung him on three sides at once.

David has a better picture of that strange, grave man than any which photographer ever made: — a tall, lean person, his back against a tree, one hand wrapped in a handkerchief, his thin face and broad forehead smeared with blood and powder-stained, from this grimy mass his eyes staring with intent eagerness into the smoke-clouds which rose above the skirmishing-line. When the Captain, pointing to the injured hand, asked how the wound was, Sherman's glance fixed itself on the bandage with a strange, surprised look. "So it is. Horse shot under me. But the hand don't begin to hurt like the damn bullet that struck my shoulder and never

left a mark. It's as hot as hell here — hot as hell. But we'll hold them."

So it was, and so they did. The Captain sought the places where death played at bowls. A shell passed beneath his horse. "Close call for my horse's legs!" he remarked. "Close call for *your* legs!" Rawlins replied. A bullet struck the Captain's sword scabbard and smacked it jingling against his body. "There's a good sword gone," he observed. But though the cannon-shot ploughed furrows through the blue lines, and they fell back, they swung always on the pivot where the bear had taken his stand, and would not retreat.

That night the Captain said, "I have not yet given up whipping them," and lay down under a tree. A torrent of rain poured on him. At dawn they lifted him into his saddle, his face white, his clothes sodden and muddy, his leg hanging limp, but his eyes undaunted. "*We* will do the attacking to-day," he said. "Every division will move at once."

At night the Confederate army was a shattered, panic-stricken mob of fugitives. Shiloh was won.

By whom? In the field they knew. But the news by way of St. Louis had a curious habit of becoming twisted. There were the old stories, too. They would not die. Eyelids were drawn down at the report of the Captain's disabled leg, and they remembered the weakness which some asserted had made him leave the army almost ten years before. The

Captain wrote to his father, "I will go on and do my duty to the very best of my ability. One thing I am very well assured of — I have the confidence of every man in my command." So he had. But those over him? Down from St. Louis came an order stripping him of active command in the field.

Sherman heard of it, and one day in hot haste rode to the Captain's headquarters. Tents were down, open boxes littered the ground, and these were being filled.

"What's the meaning of this?" he asked.

The Captain, seated on a box, a leg crossed, pulled his cigar from his mouth. "Going to leave," he answered, and back went the cigar.

"Where to?"

"Washington. Have to do it. I am no use here."

Sherman stuck his chin out. In a sudden fury he banged his hat on the ground. "Good God! Are you crazy?" he cried. "You can't do it. You've got to stay with us. We belong to you. Don't you know that much?"

"I know things can't go on for me the way they have been doing."

"All right. But wait. Why, damn it, man *he*" — jerking his thumb toward the north — "he'll be gone soon. Then everything will straighten out. Wait!"

The Captain puffed on his cigar. He took it out

and surveyed it critically, his head on one side. "Perhaps you're right," he said, slowly, after a moment. "I believe I will wait."

But the chief came down, not to Washington, but to where the Captain was, and took command in person. Around him he gathered one hundred and twenty thousand men. To the southwest, nineteen miles over rolling land, lay Corinth. There the Confederates were concentrating, sixty thousand of them. For six weeks the men in blue toiled with spade and pickaxe. It was a wonderful manœuvre. But it was for fighting that the Captain had drilled his army, and he could not play the snail with grace. He did what he was told to do, and waited.

XIX

Under the Apple-Trees

THERE were few things to laugh at during the six weeks which followed the arrival of the Chief at Union headquarters, but these the Captain enjoyed to the full. One night Rawlins loosed the torrent of his speech at an orderly who had made some blunder. The next morning he rushed up, storming, to where the Captain leaned against the pole of his tent, his hat pushed back. "What is wrong?" he inquired of Rawlins.

"Wrong!" Rawlins's rage boiled over. "That —— orderly has got even for the dressing-down I gave him. Look! Look at that!" He pointed to where his bay horse nosed a tree-trunk near by.

The Captain's hands sank deeper into his trousers pockets. He regarded the horse with gravely studious eye. "It appears to me that something *has* happened to — his tail," he observed.

"His tail!" roared Rawlins. "Not a hair left! Wait till I find that orderly." He rushed for a pistol.

But the Captain laid a hand on his arm. "Hold on, Rawlins," he said. "Think of what a blacking-brush it will make. And if you want the rest of it, go hunt that old gray mule. It's the first square meal that mule's had in a month, I guess."

Rawlins's indignation took a new turn, and the orderly was saved. "It's the last meal he'll ever get," he declared. "And it's damn easy for you to talk that way now. But wait. Some night a mule will eat the tail off of that old clay-bank horse of yours. I hope I'll be around when he does, that's all."

Rawlins had his wish. One day the men of Boone's old regiment, crowding around the Captain as he rode into their midst, were seized with a sudden sentimental fancy for personal souvenirs, and the yellow horse plunged in vain. When the Captain extricated himself from their grasping hands, the "blacking-brush" stuck up behind his own saddle, and Rawlins, circling around, repeated, "It *does* look as if something had happened to — his tail. But it can't be so. It can't be so! No mule could ever make such a clean job."

Spring was drawing to a close, and still the hundred and twenty thousand toiled and sweated. One day they heard that New Orleans had been taken. It looked to them as if the war must be nearly over. But the Captain shook his head when David suggested as much. "Not yet," he said.

"I wish it was. I want to go back and settle down. I would certainly like to be with those youngsters of mine again. Home is a pretty good place, David." The bearded mouth softened and a wistful light crept into the sober gray eyes. Was it only your firm hand and iron will, Captain, which drew those raw-boned Western giants around you? They served never so well with any other leader as with you, unless it was with the bear of Shiloh, and he was not unlike you in some ways.

For "Old Brains," who was the chief of them all in that spring, they had no such trust. When on that last day the air was rent with a vast explosion, and he drew you up in battle array and bravely marched you into Cairo to find a town empty of troops and swept clean of every article of military use except the wooden guns which grinned at you from parapets, you swore with good reason. Six weeks of digging trenches and chopping trees had not improved your tempers. But now this was done; and, after awhile, "Old Brains" took his departure — moved to Washington to become commander-in-chief; and those September days came when you were to fight again under your chosen leader.

The Captain rode from Corinth to Memphis. On the way David encountered an old friend. They came to a fine house half-hidden in its bower of roses. A benevolent, white-haired gentleman bade them dismount and enter. The shaded porch

was inviting on that hot day. The Captain's cavalry escort rode on, and he and David sat down on the porch. An old lady brought out wine and some cakes of which David had never seen the like before. Then some one else stepped from the hallway. A tall person, very beautiful and haughty, and a moment she stood straight and stiff, her hands clinched by her side. She saw David and stepped toward him. "Mr. Ford!" she said, in her soft voice and yet strangely formal.

"I thought it was 'David,'" he answered.

She passed over the inquiry, and she gave him her hand. It slipped from his own quickly, and she turned a ring on her finger while she asked him about Gravois.

"When did you hear from Lee?"

"A month ago."

"What did she say? That is, what did she say that you don't mind telling?"

He met her tantalising look squarely, but it might have been he did not answer readily enough. "Remember I am discreet, and a friend of both parties, besides," she prompted.

"There was nothing to keep secret," he said, gravely. "It is very lonely for her now, of course, without her father."

"The Doctor? Where is he?"

"I thought you knew he had gone. He is somewhere in Mississippi — fighting for the South."

"I knew it! I knew it must be that way with him!" she cried, softly, and her face was glowing. "You see how the South calls her own! He is a gentleman! We will teach the North!" She threw a look over David's shoulder, and her lips tightened.

He smiled, but she did not see that, and when he spoke of Kitty she only nodded. Then it came upon him that she was not listening to him. Behind her the others were talking. The old lady called, "Oh, Beatrix! This is General ——." She mentioned the Captain's name.

Beatrix turned; that is, her face turned. Chin could not have been more lofty nor eyes more cold, as her head bent ever so slightly in acknowledgment. Then she was saying to David, "And you have not heard from Lee since, you say?" He had said nothing of the kind; he hardly heard her question, so complete was his astonishment. A moment more, and she said good-bye, and walked swiftly into the house.

Then David thought that he understood. He heard the Captain declare, "We must go on." He heard their hostess say, "Why, dinner is just being put upon the table." He perceived the Captain hesitate politely while he cast longing eyes upon the cool depths of the hallway. And then he heard their host, not pressing the invitation, but speaking hurriedly, "Memphis is a long way on, and these

gentlemen of course are anxious to reach there by evening."

It was an episode of surprises. They were on the road almost at once and the Captain did not speak.

September came, and headquarters had been moved to Jackson, where the mystery was explained. On that day in June a rebel cavalry force had been in the neighbourhood of the Memphis road, and their host had known it. He knew, too, that another guest of his knew this; he witnessed her quick retreat. He was a Union man, the Captain's escort was miles away. A dinner lost to the Captain just then he reckoned as a diner saved.

The Captain smiled at the story, but David did not. "She would have done it quickly enough," he told himself. Anything to serve her South.

Her South was fighting bravely and skilfully in that Tennessee country. It had the Captain on the defensive. He knew his enemies were all about him, and, with a long line in his rear to protect, plotted and worked during hours of day and night to hold his own and catch them napping.

Then one evening he called in David where he sat by a table, a map spread before him marked with rulings and dots. He held out a letter. It bore the name of Rosecrans. Once the Captain had said: "There are two men in this army which I would like to serve under, if I did not command, — Sher-

man and 'Rosy.'" It was always "Rosy" with the Captain when he did not speak officially. This letter was to go to Corinth at once. Rosecrans was in danger from the east, the Captain judged.

On the evening of the third day of October David delivered the letter, and while waiting for a reply strolled about the town. It wore almost the look of a place besieged. The rebels had burned houses and blown up buildings and the railroad track before they made that retreat from it which confounded a Union chief. Rosecrans and his men now camped in it and about it, and had reared embankments and dug trenches. Cannon bristled from these. Soldiers were in the streets; on the porches of the houses were officers.

But David found one street on which it seemed that war's hand had not been laid. It was shaded, and there were gardens behind the fences, and fruit-trees and bushes through which comfortable houses blinked a peaceful eye from a lighted window. Near the curb opposite one of these a stone slab made a seat. David with his back against a tree sat down to smoke and enjoy the quiet of the calm evening, with the stars twinkling through the foliage and a gentle breeze from somewhere bathing his face. While he smoked he regarded the square of yellow light in the window across the street. He had a wish that he might go over and be one of that household for awhile, and forget that he wore

a uniform. Surely one could forget this under the shaded lamp which shed a soft glow on the table by the window-sill.

Then some one came and sat herself beside the table and began to write. David stared, and at first was sure that his fancy had filled in the frame of the picture for him. For the fine shoulders which rose from the soft folds of muslin, and the round white throat, and the coils of ruddy hair which the lamplight burnished so that even a tiny loose lock glistened against the bent face over which it curled — these he knew. He closed his eyes and memory summoned for him an evening back in Gravois. The fiddles were squeaking, slippered feet passed and repassed as he sat with her in a sheltered corner. She laughed at him for some of his opinions and chided him for others. Twice she made him hot with what she said of the man he liked above all others. Where was that man now? Did she know that he lay in prison — one of the prisons of her South? If she did — ! David believed less in her overwhelming scorn for Boone than he once had done. To be sure he was an enemy of the South; her enemy for that reason, she had made it plain. But —

The figure at the window rose. The sleeve fell away from her arm as she held an envelope with wet ink over the lamp. Was she writing to Boone? David smiled as he realised how easily his imagina-

tion wrought for him. Her figure passed from the field of his vision and he was of half a mind to go over and ask for her when he saw a shimmer among the trees and knew she had come out into the garden. She was speaking to some one whom he could not see.

A moment later another figure came out of the shade, a mulatto boy. On the steps of the path he sat down. David saw him fumbling with one of his shoes. Then the boy got up and came into the street. He passed by in lazy, aimless fashion, his hands in his pockets, humming: —

"Wake up, snakes, pelicans, and Sesh'ners!
Don't y' hear 'um comin' —
Comin' on de run?
Wake up, I tell y'! Git up, Jefferson!
Bobolishion's comin' —
Bob-o-lish-i-on!"

The refrain died away in the distance. David looked across into the garden again. There was no shimmer of white among the trees now. And in the room above an arm was reached to the lamp and turned its light low. Abruptly he arose and walked away.

An hour later when he left Rosecrans he knew that some one in the town had written that the Union lines were weakest on the north side. The letter had been intercepted half an hour ago, and

read (David did not know that it also had been sent on to its destination), and the bearer was under arrest. The bearer was a mulatto boy.

David found himself in that quiet street where the houses stood among the trees, and sat down on the stone block again and even then did not know why he had come. For what was he to do? He could tell her, accuse her. He could hear her retort. Or frighten her with the threat of what was to happen? She was not a good coward. Moreover, there was the greater question, — had he the right to tell at all?

It was Beatrix herself who resolved these questions for him. She stood in the well of the garden walk where it entered on the pavement — and he saw her only when she spoke to him. "David!" she called, softly, and "David" again.

He walked over to her. "You came back," she said. "Why is that?"

"Yes, back again," she went on, answering the astonishment which spread itself plainly on his countenance. "I saw you the time before, but not until you got up suddenly. I hoped you were coming to speak to me." Her soft drawl was caressing, and danger lay in the dark depths of her eyes. "We are not strangers, are we, David?"

"No," he said. "I wouldn't have come back if we were."

"But you have come back. Why? A message

for me? Come in. This is my aunt's home. I have been staying with her since — since that day we met on the Memphis road. I will try to make you forget how rude I was then — if you will come in."

"I cannot come in," David said.

"But your message. What is it?"

He did not reply. "Now it must be from Lee," she said, almost to herself. "It is too bad you did not give it to me when you were here before. I was writing then."

"But not to her," he said, swiftly. "I know it was not to her, and you sent the letter off by a messenger."

"Why, so I did." The drawl was as languid as ever, but the eyelids dropped an instant, and it was not confusion they hid. Then she went on. "Now I wonder if he forgot all about the letter. Aunt Rachel's boys are so careless!"

David struggled with himself. Without looking at him, she added, lightly, "Well, it don't matter much. He'll remember about it to-morrow, I reckon."

Suddenly David spoke. "The boy did not forget about the letter. But he did not deliver it. He was stopped."

"Stopped?" Her brows were raised, then passionately, "Who stopped him? A Yankee, of course. Even a lady's letters — "

"A lady's letters when they are sent through the

lines secretly must often be stopped," he returned. "Beatrix — "

"Oh, go on!" she cried. "You want to know to whom it was to go, and the boy would not tell you! Well, to Philip. But what right have you to be informed about my correspondence? What right, I say?" She stopped. Then she held out her hand. "And now that you know so much," she finished, coldly, "you will give me the letter, please."

"I have not got it," he answered, and then he knew he must tell her the rest, and did.

"Well?" she said, and looked him defiantly in the face.

"But don't you see?" he said, slowly. "It doesn't end here."

"Then where?"

"With yourself. They will trace the letter to you."

She laughed, and laid a hand on his sleeve. "David," she asked, "did you think I would run?"

"No, but you cannot stay here."

"Oh, but I really must," she mocked. "To receive Philip when he drives out you Yankees."

"But the Yankees won't be driven out. They will stay here. Besides they will soon be fighting here — about the town — in it, perhaps. It will be no place for a woman."

Suddenly she raised her head and her eyes were

brilliant. "David," she said, "the war is not over. You do not know the women of the South yet, it seems. But you will. Their men do the fighting, but the women have their part. And you will never find that they are to be frightened from it. No, not in its worst day."

A time came when her words repeated themselves to him. Now they awoke in him a sudden great admiration. Here again was the South, glowing, proud, dauntless — prophesying unconsciously its own brave end.

There was no more for him to say. He pressed her hand. When he reached the corner of the street she was still standing there. She waved an arm to him as he raised his cap.

At daylight the next day Van Dorn attacked, and David all at once found himself in the street in front of Rosecrans's headquarters fighting, not to keep the rebels from Corinth, but to drive them out of it. "Pop" Price's storming column had pierced the Union line and, ploughed through and through by the converging fire of two great Union forts, yet swept on into the very heart of the town. Ragged fellows most of them, but splendid in their courage and led by men as fearless as themselves. On David at the head of a little knot of fugitives whom he was trying to rally, this yelling, desperate, broken line bore down.

But he saw only one figure. And it rushed

directly at him — a tall, slender figure, the shoulders a little stooped, a thin white face with high forehead and curious straining eyes fixed on his own. Then a point like ice pressed against his leg, he was lifted from his feet. He seemed to be floating forward — yet the figure now moved away from him fast, and he could not see what he knew should be in the buttonhole there, — a piece of bright coloured ribbon. There was a flash of violet light before his eyes. Everything was gone.

XX

The wedge

IN the last week of November a compact body of cavalry entered the little town of Corinth from the southeast. Horses and uniforms alike wore the marks of hard travel, the faces of the riders were tanned and weather-beaten. For four weeks almost continually they had been in the saddle while they swung a great circle which had this same town for its starting-point. Near their head a young officer reined up sharply opposite one of the biggest houses, and slid to the ground to grip the hand of a man in uniform who had hailed him and ran down to the street. While the cavalry passed, these two walked up on to the porch together, and there David dropped into a seat and pulled off his gloves, striking them against his knees as he stretched his legs. He gave a sigh of satisfaction. "Dead beat!" remarked his companion, laconically.

"Not quite. But not far from it, either. And mighty glad to be sitting on something — flat. Mud

and dust, some miles of railroad track torn up, some cotton burned or badly smoked, and — that's all."

"Leg trouble you?"

By way of answer that unoffending member received a slap. "I wouldn't remember Shiloh long if the bullet I got there was all I had to remember it by," David added. His voice dropped on the last word, and he pulled the gloves through his hands. He roused himself with a jerk of the head. "The dickens!" he exclaimed. "Here I've seen you but once since you were exchanged, and I'm talking about myself. How does it feel to be your own man again?"

Boone laughed. "I've tried it for six weeks now, and, on the whole, I like the sensation. For one thing, the table is better here than in my old boarding-place. Again, I can stretch my arms without striking a wall or stirring up strife among my fellow boarders. I'll tell you all about it to-night. By the way, you'll have to pull out to-morrow morning. Orders for you to report at Holly Springs."

David nodded. "The Captain? How is he?"

"Same as ever. Takes everything, good and bad, as if he knew it was going to be that way long before. You know 'Black Julia'?"

"That old slave of his wife's?"

"Yes. You remember he said he didn't like to hold her, but would not sell her? Well, she relieved him of the strain of worry. Ran away. Never left

a good-bye. It was one of the few times I have heard the Captain laugh. He declares he has a case against Mr. Lincoln — that it was the President's 'gradual emancipation' scheme which gave Julia the hint. Secretly, he'd be glad, I think, if his two other 'faithful servitors' would imitate her example."

"He never did understand how to handle them."

"At any rate, he isn't ashamed of the failing. And he's been making the best of having to sit still. We've been having considerable good music round headquarters lately, and he enjoys it. They were singing 'The Star Spangled Banner' the other night. I could hear him humming the tune with them. When he knew I was listening, he quit. It was good to see him taking part in it. He don't give much time to that sort of thing as a rule, and he's got a big puzzle to solve now."

"He has had something of that kind from the start."

"Yes, but this is the biggest of all. It is the wedge which will split the rebellion. And the Mississippi is to be the line of cleavage from St. Louis to New Orleans. It is a long way to look ahead, perhaps; but that is the end of this movement south."

"The Captain was never near-sighted," remarked David.

"No, and he has untied some tangled knots already, but this Vicksburg picnic is the toughest one

yet. All the children want to go, of course. And of course they can't. There's some two hundred miles of country in the rear along which the lemonade and cake and ice-cream must come, and there are a lot of small outsiders who don't belong to the same Sunday school, and who won't keep their hands off the refreshments. So — "

" Cut it short. I know that. He wants Vicksburg, he means to have it, and he's got a long line to defend — from the children of the other school. What's he going to do? "

Boone leisurely crossed a knee. " If you will have patience, my son, I will try to tell you a true story. This celebrated picnic, I was about to remark, will probably be in charge of Deacon Sherman."

David laughed.

"A fact,—our dear, mild, sweet-tempered Brother Sherman, ' Old Sugar Coated.' . It is the talk, merely the talk, mind you, that Brother Sherman is to be sent ahead so as to alleviate the itching which they seem to suffer from at Washington to send Brother McClernand down there with a separate command. That would not suit the Captain."

David muttered, savagely, " Why can't they let him alone? "

" I think they will — this time. Meanwhile he is collecting all the forage and supplies he can lay hands on, organising his men, and keeping a watchful eye on the antics of the gentlemen in gray who

do not seem deeply impressed with the fact that they are being whipped and must stay south of our headquarters. Also, I forgot to say, he is giving a good deal of attention to the project for utilising the African surplus."

David's brows drew together.

"Yes. As far as eye can see, the ladies and gentlemen of colour are picking cotton. They are being paid for it, too — twelve cents a pound. Which same they haven't yet quite got used to. And the result? The Government is realising a very fair sum from the sale of the cotton, and the speculators — " He broke off sharply, and finished, "And there you have all my news."

"Not quite all. You were going to tell me something else."

"Was I?" with vacant face. But David insisted.

"Oh, well, then, I was. I suppose you ought to know it anyhow. Your uncle is down here."

"He is. Now what is that for?" Apprehension was so plainly in the remark that Boone hastened to add, "You don't need to worry. It isn't anything alarming. It's just — I dislike to say it — just a sharp, low trick your uncle is putting up. The Captain drove out all the cotton speculators by a general order. He had to. A few days later a telegram came. I saw it. It asked for passes to the front for Mr. Mayhew and 'a friend.' They got the

passes, and the ' friend ' is deep in the cotton-trading, I'd swear."

" Then tell the Captain so, if you haven't already. I will, if you don't. My uncle has no right to do this."

" I have not told him, and you won't tell him, either, when I say that I couldn't prove there is anything wrong. I only feel it in my bones. As for Mr. Mayhew — butter wouldn't melt in his mouth."

There was a grunt of disgust. Boone went on, " He is here ostensibly on private business, and he has shown a lot of good sense in keeping out of the military way. He's brought in rather valuable information, too, once or twice. In consequence, he has no trouble when he wants to see the Captain. He's been inquiring about you."

" Yes," assented David, drily. " That's very strange." Then, looking up, " There's no use of pretending that affection is lost between my uncle and myself. We don't agree on many things. Let's drop the subject. You haven't heard of any letters for me?"

" Letters?" For an instant Boone enjoyed the confusion which the word brought into the other's face, then he said, quickly, " No, I haven't. I've kept a lookout, as you asked, and made inquiries. But — Well, the fact is, I believe all the letters — her letters, I mean — must have gone astray on the

way down. You know how mixed up things are. And what with headquarters being moved and all that, it's no wonder. She wrote, of course. But I couldn't get on the track of a single letter."

There was no answer. David was pulling at his gloves and studying his hands. After a minute he said, quietly, "All right. It's the way you say, no doubt. I must go over to report now. I'll see you after awhile."

Two days later David landed at headquarters at Holly Springs, to find the Captain gone and an order awaiting him to report in person at once at Cairo. It was dark when he reached the familiar little river town, and a word of inquiry sent him quickly down the stilted board walk to the water-side. Out in the river Admiral Porter's flagship was a maze of twinkling lights. A banquet was to be held that evening. David made his way to her, and at the gangway was halted by the person of a solidly built man in creased and soiled citizen's clothing. An orderly had stopped this visitor, and was telling him that he could not come aboard.

David, in uniform and with his order, was impatiently passing, when a hand was laid on his shoulder, and a face, very tired but filled with grim humour, looked into his own. "Captain," said a voice, which made him start and come to a quick salute, "can't you persuade them that I am not a dangerous person?"

David grasped the hand that slipped down his arm, and the orderly stepped aside. They went into the dining-cabin, the Captain still laughing over his reception.

The long cabin was a blaze of light, and uniforms were all around the table.

At its head sat a wiry, muscular man in uniform. He was listening to a story which some one was telling, his large eyes twinkling with appreciation. He did not see the newcomers at first, then catching sight of the Captain, remained a moment seated, pulling at his beard. The Captain spoke, and the admiral sprang up and grasped his hand. "I did not know you at first. Those clothes, you see," he explained. "But sit down. We'll have a chair at once. We're just going to have a good time."

But the Captain declined the invitation. He would not sit down. The admiral walked out of the room with him. Then the Captain asked, quickly, "You wrote that the McClernand matter has come to a head?"

"Yes," said Porter. "I saw the President in Washington. In effect he told me that he had a better general now than either you or Sherman, and that he had given him power to raise a big army and go down the river to Vicksburg at once."

The Captain asked a question in short, precise words, and got as brief an answer. He asked another. In ten minutes he had drawn from the

admiral all that he knew on the subject. He bit off the end of a cigar, looked at it a moment, and stuck it into his mouth. Abruptly he demanded, "How soon can you move?"

"To-morrow, if necessary."

"All right. I will see that thirty thousand men on transports are ready to go down to Vicksburg when you reach Memphis. I will move south myself at once. Joe Johnston is at Vicksburg with forty thousand men. That will bring him up north. You and Sherman must get into Vicksburg while he is fighting *me*. That's all."

Porter caught the Captain's arm. "Come in now and join us."

"I can't do that."

"Why not?"

"I am going back to headquarters."

"At any rate, have something to eat first."

"No. I will start at once. Good-bye." He shook the admiral's hand again, passed through the lighted room, with a nod, and David joined him. An hour later they were well on their way to Holly Springs, and the fortunes of an army of one hundred thousand men had been embarked, and the first move made in one of the greatest sieges of history.

The work which was done during the four weeks which saw November of that year end and half of December's days go by, made many a staff-officer and commander about headquarters wonder why

ever he had been born. The Captain stood above them, and there were no excuses taken, while he worked himself with an energy that seemed never to tire. The enemy hovered on his flanks and pestered him, and behind him that long line along which came the lemonade and cake and ice-cream of Boone's Sunday-school picnic drew them like flies. Upon keeping this line intact, it seemed to the Captain then that the success of his expedition depended, and to keep in touch with the points along it was no easy task. There was the telegraph, of course, but there were reasons to doubt the integrity of its dots and dashes, as he well knew. Gentlemen on horseback there were, wearing gray or butternut, who frequently tapped these wires and, without a by-your-leave, enjoyed the secrets of the conversations between the Captain and his officers, and were so shy withal that they never sent a word along to make their presence known. Also accidents happened which made the Captain and others say uncomplimentary things about his writing-master.

One short wire ran from headquarters to an outlying command. So often were its messages read by the enemy that the Captain hit on a great scheme. He would have a cipher code to which only his correspondent and himself should have the key. One cold night a long dispatch in this cipher came from the headquarters, and his correspondent at the other end was summoned from bed to read it. For two

hours he struggled with it in vain. Half-frozen, he telegraphed back in cipher that he could not understand. Out of bed and, in his haste, with only a modest garment between himself and the arctic atmosphere, did the Captain scramble, and seized the dispatch. Verily, it was Greek and of a new alphabet. Not a word meant anything. Yet, as the cipher was his own, pride would not let him give it up. So the early morning light found him still at it, his nose blue, and as his correspondent would always have it — the air about him of the same colour. Dawn made him ashamed, and back to bed he crept. The cipher code fell into disrepute therewith.

Officers of the staff often took the place of the telegraph. There was hard riding in those days, and David's strength came back and his flesh hardened with the miles he covered over the winter-roughened Mississippi roads.

One morning, riding away from headquarters, he was hailed from a house on the main street, and reluctantly drew up. His uncle balanced himself on his crutch at the edge of the porch. "David," he said, "come up here, won't you? I want to talk with you."

"I haven't time now," David answered. "What do you wish to say?"

Mr. Mayhew's voice was reproachful. "Do you know we have been in this town together for

three weeks, and in that time you haven't said twenty words to me?" There was no reply. "What is wrong?" he asked. "Come, speak out! Have I said anything to offend you? I thought of asking the Captain, but I did not. Now I ask you. It is only fair you should answer. What is it?"

"Nothing." David fingered the reins impatiently. "I have been busy. Is there anything else?"

His uncle studied his face, and shook his head. "I am sorry for whatever has made you feel this way," he said, "for I am proud of you, David. I told the Captain only the other day that you had done your duty always, and repaid me many times over for whatever little I have been able to do for you. That makes it hurt all the more. I have made mistakes, I suppose. Is it one of those?"

"It is important I should go on. If you have nothing you wish done at once, I will have to leave."

"No," answered Mr. Mayhew, "I will not trouble you." He eased himself painfully on his crutch.

David drew in his reins, then turned abruptly in his saddle again. "I will be glad to do what you want if I can."

Mr. Mayhew shook his head and steadied himself with one hand against a post of the porch. His crippled leg swung free of the ground. "I can manage it somehow myself," he said. "But there is something else you *can* do. I have a letter I wish

delivered. You can see that it is sent down to Oxford."

"Oxford? I am going there myself."

"When?"

"Now. Is the letter ready?"

"Why, yes. It was ready last night. It is for the gentleman who came down with me from St. Louis. Will you give it to him in person?" Perhaps there was a shade more of emphasis on that last word than its speaker had intended. "Yes," David said. "Let me have it."

Mr. Mayhew hobbled indoors. A minute later David was riding away, a long sealed envelope in his breast pocket. "If you don't find Mr. Salesburg, you might as well bring it back," came to him from the porch.

The early December night was falling two days later when David rode up the same street, one leg thrown over the pommel of his saddle to rest his aching muscles, and drew up in front of the house. He was about to slide to the ground when his uncle's figure appeared in the doorway. "I saw you coming," he called. "But you're ahead of time. I thought you said to-morrow."

"I did. But I decided not to wait. Mr. Salesburg — your friend — "

"You found him?"

"No — he was arrested just before I got there."

"Arrested!" Mr. Mayhew had swung himself

out to the steps. "What's that? You can't mean he has — been buying cotton again? He expressly told me he would stop that."

"No," David said, and wondered a little at the evenness of his own voice. "So far as I know he bought no cotton. He was arrested on suspicion of communicating with the enemy."

Mr. Mayhew shifted himself on his crutch, and ran his tongue along his lips. Then he said, slowly, "That is serious. I cannot make it out. I have known him a long time. There must be some mistake. On suspicion, you say? What was the evidence?"

"I don't know. I did not inquire. But they are holding him."

"So he sent no message? You did not see him?"

"No. Under the circumstances I did not try."

"But you gave him my letter, of course." It was a statement, not a question. David leaned forward in the saddle, staring into his uncle's face. But the heavy-lidded eyes met his own, and Mr. Mayhew added, "Yes, why not? It was a business letter. Besides, his arrest is all a mistake."

There was a moment in which David, doubting still the sincerity of that careless inquiry, did not speak. He thrust his hand into his coat. "Anyway, I did not deliver the letter," he said. "Here it is."

Mr. Mayhew took it, and tapped it with a finger.

Then he dropped it carelessly into his pocket. "Perhaps it is just as well," he said. "It would be of no use to him as matters stand. I am very much obliged to you. But — arrested! I can hardly believe it."

David rode away while his uncle repeated the remark, shaking his head over it incredulously.

At the week's end, however, headquarters were moved to Oxford, and there it was reported that the case against Salesburg was not to be pushed. The fact was, there was not evidence sufficient to hold him. In default of this he was given twenty-four hours to get out of the lines. From Holly Springs, where Mr. Mayhew had remained, David received two days later a lengthy letter. Mr. Mayhew wrote that, while he still did not believe that Salesburg was guilty of the charge brought against him, he had discovered facts which made him glad their connection had been severed. If he had known these facts before, as a loyal Union man, he would have been forced to lodge the information at headquarters. With an exclamation of disgust David chucked the letter into the fire. At the same time he was conscious that his action sprang from an impulse as intangible as was the feeling which always made him uneasy in his uncle's presence.

But two weeks of hard riding, while the Captain organised his connections with the North and made ready to move on Vicksburg when the time came,

banished these thoughts from his mind. Boone had been sent north on special duty connected with enrolments, and was not expected back for ten days. Again and again, coming into his room at night, David sat down to a table in the corner and drew paper to him and wet a pen, and there remained, scratching aimless figures, and writing the one word, "Lee," "Lee," over and over, in the end each time to drop the pen and tear up the paper. What was the use of writing when no answer came?

XXI

From the Front

IT seemed to Lee as if that summer would never end, but, at last, October came and the sun's heat was lifted from the country about St. Louis. She began to ride again. For weeks Dick had stamped in his stall or run at will about the big field which was his exclusive possession. He would canter to the fence at the first sight of her approaching figure and nose into her hand for the apple which he was sure to find. While he munched it she would stroke his muzzle and talk to him. Then he learned things which he had never known before, and it may be his soft eyes sometimes gave her the answer for which she asked. 'Lias polished the horse's coat and time and again brought him saddled and bridled to the mounting block, and poked his head into the library door with a brisk, "Dick's all ready, Miss Lee." But she would reply, "I don't think I will ride to-day," and had always ready some good reason for the decision. Never did she show surprise. It would have puzzled the most observing

onlooker to say that the horse had not been brought to the house by her express order.

Back to the stable each time Dick was slowly led, 'Lias muttering to himself for every step of the way, and, while the saddle and bridle were being removed, the muttering went on. Dick, grinding feed in the manger or cropping late grass in the back field, reflected on these vagaries. He was told there had been no letter from the master since September. But had not the last letter said they must not be alarmed if they did not hear from him directly for some time? He was marching through a country rent with war, where communication with the North was almost impossible and always uncertain. He would write, of course, but that was all he could promise.

With this knowledge why did she come down to the pasture bars that day in early November and press her cheek against Dick's neck and wind her fingers in his mane and stand so silent even when he rubbed his nose against her shoulder? There had been another battle, to be sure. But the lists of the killed and wounded had been printed in the newspapers. 'Lias had read them aloud that morning. The master's name was not in them. Nor did it appear in any of the reports which followed. He tried to tell her to get the newspaper and see this for herself. But she only shook her head and kissed the

white spot between his eyes, and then went away, walking swiftly toward the house.

After that there were three weeks in which she came often to see him, her face white, her eyes dry but far-away and empty in their gaze, and she so very, very silent. 'Lias told him she had written. To Captain Ford — twice, and no answer came. Then a letter to the young man with the chestnut hair who sat so easily the gray horse which made him (Dick) stretch his lean legs to their very limit in a burst of speed on the Gravois road one day now almost a year ago. 'Lias shook his head over this last letter. "If Mr. David had not answered, how could she expect anything from the rebel side? And the Doctor was safe, of course. But it would be mighty comforting to hear so, just the same."

Old Betty, who had recovered from her latest mortal illness, was deeply concerned, and one day when Lee came to the cabin door to bid her good morning, laid a gnarled hand on her arm. "Honey, it bust m' ole heart, it jes' do, t' see yo' frettin' yo-self dis hyar way 'bout de Doctah. He am all right, Miss Lee. De Lawd's done watchin' ober him, yo' kin be sho' he am. He won't 'low one o' his lambs t' be shawn o' her only parent. Pray t' him, Mis' Lee. Git down on yo' knees an' pray t' him. Pray'r is wond'rful comfurtin', honey. An' it done 'suade de Lawd more'n once, I tell yo', it done do dat sho', many times."

"I know that, Betty." Lee looked into the pleading old face and smoothed the withered hand between her own. "I do pray, many, many times."

"But mebbe yo' ain't done pray'd hard 'nough, honey. A pow'rful lot 'pends on dat. An' yo' mustn't try t' tell de Lawd what he oughter do. Jess gib yo'self 'nto his hands, an' tell him yo' 'lows he will do what is fo' de best. I know, honey, I know, case I done hab 'sperience. Der wuz de time when I wuz married t' Zach'riah Peyton, tha' shif'less Georgy nigger what yo' pa done brung up 'long wif him on one o' his trips. Yo' wuz a li'l girl den, honey, no more'n high ez Ole Betty's knee, but I done r'member it all well ez it wuz yest'day. Zach-'riah suttinly did beat m' cruel, but I jes' went on, an' didn't do nuffin', an' jest stood it long ez I cud. Den when it gotten so bad dat it didn't seem it cud git no wusser, I begun t' pray. I pray'd pow'rful hard, honey, an' I pray'd night an' mornin', an' 'tween meals, when de sun wuz riz an' when it wuz a-settin' an' 'long in de night-time, too. But I didn't try t' tell de Lawd what he oughter do. All I ast him wuz jes' t' take Ole Betty outer her trubble. 'Lawd,' I sez, 'good Lawd, dis yer state o' misery cain't go on. It am too sham'ful. An' I knows yo' won't 'low it. One o' us gotter go. Take one o' us, Lawd! Take Zach, er take Ole Betty.' Dat's what I said. 'Take Zach er take Ole Betty. I doan't cyar which. I'm sho' wo'n

out, an' I wanter die.' An' he done it. He heard me. An' thank de Lawd, he done take Zach."

If the sympathy of the rest of her people did not take the form of exhortation and the recitation of experience, it was not less constant, and Lee found consolation many a time in the arms of Mammy Rachel, who had been a body-servant till age retired her to the post of a privileged character with nominal duties in the kitchen.

So November drew to a close, and one afternoon, riding homeward, Lee saw a wagon coming toward her, and recognised the crippled figure in a back seat. It surprised her. Mr. Mayhew had not been seen in Gravois for a month past, and 'Lias had repeated an ugly rumour about the business which took him away. Nevertheless, by the time the carriage was opposite, she had made up her mind to speak to him. So determined was she that, even when she realised that he had shrunk back in the shadow of the carriage cover and turned his face away, she called to him. She called him by name a second time when he did not turn, and then his face came about. "Oh, Miss Shirley!" he exclaimed. "I did not expect to see you. I was very tired. I rather think I was half-asleep."

She did not reply to the lie. "I called to you," she explained, "because I thought you might be able to tell me something about David."

"Yes?"

Her lips closed tightly, she almost repented of having spoken. But she remembered her misery and that here was a chance, and no chance must go by. "Do you know where he is?" she asked.

"I believe he is at Holly Springs."

"Holly Springs?"

"In Mississippi." Mr. Mayhew's eyes had not travelled over her face for nothing. He added, with sudden interest, "Can I do anything for you? I may be near there soon. Holly Springs is headquarters — the Union headquarters just at present. And I am luckily able to be of some small service to the Captain, now and then. So I might be of service to you also."

"If you will take a letter for me to David, you will do me a great favour. It is about my father. I have not heard from him. I thought David might be able to find out why — why it is so."

Mr. Mayhew's mouth opened, and she thought that he was going to question her. But his tongue passed over his lips, and he drew down his brows. "That is too bad," he said. "But you must not be worried. Your father is all right, of course. You cannot depend on letters which have to come through the Union lines, remember. I will take your letter with the greatest pleasure."

He rode into the gate behind her, and waited in the carriage while she ran into the house and wrote a short note She hesitated with the flap of the

envelope unsealed, then ran out again, and handed it to him. He turned it in his hands. "With your permission," he said, smiling; and touched it to his lips, and pressed the flap down. "Times are uncertain," he vouchsafed. "And some accidental hand might not be as friendly as mine."

She was afraid he saw the disgust which this civil remark brought into her face. But then he was driving away and still smiling on her as he raised his hat. She never knew that as soon as his head was withdrawn into the carriage, a pointed nail was slipped beneath the extreme edge of the flap of the envelope, and that satisfaction narrowed his eyes as he leisurely perused the folded sheet of paper which he extracted. Yet it was a simple note, a frank call to an old friend and comrade to help her. Between the lines might have been another message, and, perhaps, it was that which made Mr. Mayhew's smile last for as long as he balanced the paper in his fingers.

The girl, standing on the porch, watched the carriage drive away with wishes in her heart which she hardly understood. But she was not smiling, and, presently, gathering up her riding-dress, with a little sigh she descended the steps and walked toward the stable, leading Dick.

'Lias met her half-way, and took the bridle. He was scowling. She asked him why. He jerked a

thumb over his shoulder down the road. "That!" he said, "Mr. Mayhew."

"Why, what's the matter? He has just done me a service. He has taken a letter for me. Perhaps we will soon hear about the Doctor."

"If he helps bring word from him I'll be ready to forget a good deal, Miss Lee," 'Lias answered. "But, if so, it'll be the first thing he's done to my liking. Do you know what he came up here for?"

"I hadn't thought anything about it."

"Well, it was to get rid of his property. I heard some time ago that he was trying to sell it. Yesterday, so Abe Happel up at the store says, he sold the house and farm. I don't know what he did with the niggers, but they're all gone too."

"If he did, it is his own business," she returned. "He has a right to do what he wishes with what belongs to him." But she did not feel the indifference which she voiced; and, when 'Lias shook his head, she demanded, "Why did he sell the place?"

"Nobody knows for certain. But—" He looked up suddenly and his eyes were wrathful. "They say he got out of here because he knew that it soon wouldn't be healthy for him to be about these parts. He's been corresponding with a man in St. Louis whom they locked up a week ago for treason. It's that lawyer he used to have so much business with. 'Cotton trading,' *he* called it. I don't mind out-and-out fighting. But there's been ugly, under-

hand business going on here for two years past. I told Mr. David about it long before the war started. Now they've found it out, and I doubt if Mr. Mayhew is seen here again. If he is—!" He shook a fist.

"'Lias, what is all this talk?" she returned. "You mustn't believe everything you hear. I sha'n't, anyhow. See that Dick is well rubbed down." With that she turned and went back to the house. But more than once in the following week of unbroken silence from the South, wondering whether her letter had yet reached its destination, Mr. Mayhew's face drew itself for her in space. And each time it seemed to be laughing at her. Dick, champing over his manger and pawing the planks, twisted his neck in vain whenever the stable door opened. She and he rode no more together for that time.

Kitty came to the house regularly, and once or twice Lee took supper with her and with Miss Sarah Pinckney. But Kitty's inconsequential chatter, and Miss Pinckney's occasional sniffing comments upon the conduct of the war alike failed to draw her from her recollections for longer than the moment.

Then there came that day in December when Dick knew that a new thing had happened. 'Lias entered the roomy stall and patted his neck, and said, "Good-bye." Something had got into 'Lias's faded eyes and his jaw worked nervously. After that another hand led Dick to the watering-trough and

gave him his oats, and he turned his head about and whinnied in vain. Neither his mistress nor 'Lias came to see him. He could not understand.

On that morning she had returned from a long ride on the Barracks road, and went into the house, and she had sat, her hands folded in her lap, her eyes fixed on the picture above the fireplace, — how long she did not know, — when she heard Mammy Rachel's dragging steps, and then her voice talking to herself. "Yessir, yessir, Mis' Lee done be at home, I reckon. But I ain't goin' t' tell yo' dat till I done be sho' she wants t' see yo'."

But Mammy Rachel's cautious inquiry was forestalled. Something cold tightened about Lee's heart, and one long look she gave to the kindly face which looked down on her from the wall, and whispered to it, "Oh, wait for me! Wait for me! I will hurry — hurry so fast. If you will only wait!" Then she ran to the doorway and asked Mammy Rachel a question and received her answer. It was Philip who had come. He waited for her in the apple orchard. There she sped.

He stepped from a clump of blackberry canes which screened him from inquisitive eyes, and hurried to her and clasped her hands.

Her fingers were icy and her eyes fastened themselves on his. She did not speak, but he knew that the hardest part of his duty was done for him. "Yes," he said, "he is wounded. But he will not

die. I am sure he will not die now that he knows you are coming."

He put an arm about her shoulders and led her to the old bench under the nearest tree, and knelt beside her. "It was at Oxford," he went on. "He was shot — leading a charge. They say he was far ahead of his men. They had been driven back almost when he put himself at their head. He is at Vicksburg now. I am going to take you there."

"Yes," she answered. "Yes, I will be ready at once." She was on her feet swiftly, straight, and tall, and so steady that the hand he put out to support her was not needed. She started forward, then suddenly turned on him.

"Vicksburg?" she cried. "Why is he there?"

"It was the best place. Beatrix is there. He is at her house."

"But Oxford?" she insisted, and he knew that, if he had concealed the truth, he would have had to tell it then. "Oxford? That happened long ago."

"Yes," he answered. "But I only knew about him a week ago. I — that is, they took him to Vicksburg then, and I am here."

But, Philip, you were not sent, and it was not "they" who brought him from the crowded misery of that little Mississippi hospital to the comfort and care of the old mansion back of the Vicksburg bluffs. She knew this instantly. And half an hour later when she and you and 'Lias were driving for St.

Louis and she asked you, "The letter I sent you about two weeks ago? You never got it?" he answered, "No." He did not guess all that she gave him with that hand which was laid in his own. She did not know herself. But this was in her heart. He alone had come to her when a friend was needed most.

On the Friday afternoon following that same Wednesday two letters were placed in David's hands. They were both from her, and the envelope of each was a map of those stamps and endorsements which confessed the failure of a military post. He read them to learn that the South had called the Doctor away at last, and that she was alone, and very lonely. He read the letters through many times, hoping to find that which would make it less hard for him to know that he had failed her. Once he had promised the Doctor something. This was the way he had carried out that promise. He put the letters away and went straight to the Captain's quarters to ask for a leave of absence. He was sure he would get it when he told — not all, but enough to make his reason plain.

In front of him, as he entered the room where the Captain sat at a table, stalked a tall man, mud-splashed to his hips. David knew him for a cavalry officer who had led a raid to the north.

The Captain looked up, gave one glance to the

officer's face, then twisted in his chair with the sharp demand, "Van Dorn? Where is he?"

"The last sign I saw of him was near Potonoc on the railroad. He was moving north with a large number of men."

In a flash the Captain was bending above the table, and a pen flying over a sheet of paper. One sheet after another was tossed aside. Orderly, aides were summoned. In five minutes horses were clattering up to headquarters and away as fast as the orders could be handed them. David, bidden to stay where he was, stood by a window and waited. In a little while the Captain whirled around. "I may want you in a few hours. Get some sleep." He turned to his work again.

David hesitated and made a step toward the bent figure by the table. Then he faced about and went out. And he tried to take the Captain's advice. But sleep! What was the chance of that with this miserable uncertainty in his mind, and against his breast two letters to remind him, if he should forget for a moment, that she had asked him to help her? It was not his fault. That only made it harder to wait here, his hands tied. He had heard enough in the Captain's office to guess at the rest. Van Dorn was out, and might cut them off from the North. To every post commander's orders were speeding to watch for him, and hold the stations at any cost. For himself David knew that there was work ahead

which would keep him — how long could any one say?

It was at that most chill and dreary of all hours, when dawn seems never so far away, that an orderly touched him on the shoulder. The Captain wanted him at once.

David found him sitting by the table where he had left him, its top littered with papers, a saucer filled with stumps of cigars by his elbow, a fresh one burning furiously and the room so thick with smoke that his short body was hardly more than a blot in the haze of blue. There were deep hollows below his eyes which were feverishly bright. "Take this order to Colonel Murphy at once at Holly Springs," he said. "See that he understands that it is imperative. I am sending reinforcements. You can't get there too soon."

XXII

At holly springs

FOR three days Boone had been doing what he detested most, — clerical work. Detailed to help verify and correct the rolls of forces in the district, he had come to Holly Springs the day before and here had encountered what made his task more irksome, — a commanding officer who chose to take his arrival as an intrusion and his inquiries as an imputation upon his own capacity. There were fifteen hundred men in the town. Boone saw enough of the discipline within an hour to satisfy him that his report upon the post and its condition would not please its commander. But he maintained an unruffled front to the surly treatment, and stuck to the room overlooking the main street where he had his papers spread out on a table.

On this afternoon the fading light made him halt when he was but half through his labours. With the prospect of a long night's work he stretched his arms so that the muscles cracked, and tilted back his chair. The muddy street under a gray sky made

a cheerless outlook. He was growing weary of the everlasting figures in blue who paced the front of headquarters a hundred feet away or marched in small squads across town to relieve guard. It was an immense relief when a ramshackle wagon pulled by a starved horse turned the corner above and sunk into instant repose in front of the one-time hotel. He watched with quickened curiosity its occupants emerge from between its tattered curtains.

First got down a tall, raw-boned man in an overcoat, who continued to hold the reins and whip, next a much younger man, his soft hat pulled low, and his black clothes, for all their ill fit, exhibiting a certain smartness in the fashion they were worn. Bareheaded, the young man spoke to some one within, then extended an arm and handed out a lady. Boone stared. There were a few women about town, to be sure, but none like this. She carried herself with an air which even the long travelling wrap did not disguise. But she wore a veil, and that article of apparel was distinctly irritating. It completely hid her face. She walked to the steps; there she stopped. After a moment's conversation, her escort left her and entered the building. The girl sat down on the steps. She leaned against a post, her hands dropped in her lap, and it was plain that she was very tired.

If a squad of soldiers in Confederate gray had driven up in the wagon they would hardly have

gained more attention than had the travellers. It seemed that notice of their arrival had communicated itself instantly to many quarters. From up and down the street half a dozen of the younger officers converged upon the house. Most of them strolled by it with obvious carelessness; two of them mounted the steps and met on the porch. There they went through a pantomime behind the back of the girl which brought chuckles from their observers. They affected sudden surprise, then loquacity; one slapped the other on the shoulder. Boone made sure that they were assuring each other that the next day would be clear if it did not rain, or elucidating some equally safe proposition. Between whiles they took side-shots at the girl on the step. After a minute they ceased to try to conceal this and nudged elbows apparently to spur reciprocal courage to the point where a polite approach might be made upon the object of their interest. They were so engaged when the lady's escort came out of the door and stopped short, staring at them with an intentness which made possible only retreat or immediate reprisal. The officers hesitated, then had the grace to show confusion, and retreated. Boone grinned and waited to see the rest of the play. It was soon over. The girl rose and raised her veil as she mounted the steps. For a moment the profile of her face was plain. The glimpse made

Boone frown, then lean back and begin to search his recollection.

Round the mess-table that night there was little talked but of the three travellers — or rather one of them. They had come from Columbus that day, it seemed, and were on their way south. A breakdown on the road eight miles north had left them the choice of an indefinite wait or a drive. They had chosen to try the latter and had impressed the ramshackle wagon in a hazard of the lakes of mud and knee-deep ruts which were all that was left of the wagon-road into Holly Springs. This much information, supplemented by the fact that they had passes for the front issued in St. Louis, was the stock in trade of the table's conversation. It was enough to encourage the making of many bets that no more would be known when the travellers left town. The Holly Springs hotel probably had more casual visitors in uniform that evening than on any one occasion since its occupation by the Union forces.

But Boone was not one of these. With a pipe and a determination to complete his work he seated himself at the table immediately after supper, and it was midnight when he threw down his pen and began a last smoke before bed. Then entered a lieutenant of his acquaintance, and precipitated himself upon the bed with a violence which made that

venerable article groan. "No use," he grumbled. "Couldn't find out a thing."

Boone laughed. "What did you expect? Did you think they were spies?"

"They could be anything they wanted if I learned what it was. It looks as if that five dollars I bet was to go to feed the crowd And I'm a whole month behind on pay already."

Boone puffed away, and the other continued. "That's an idea, though — about their being spies. I'll throw out a word or two. If the old man got it into his head that they were, he — "

The pipe came out, and Boone remarked, sagely, "The dog might have caught the rabbit if he hadn't stopped to scratch for a flea. The colonel 'might' but he 'wouldn't.' He isn't troubling himself much about anything." He gave a grunt of disgust. "It's the devil the way some things go on anyhow. Look at that canting, smooth old hypocrite, Mayhew! — poking his nose into everything, sneaking out of town and back again, always so damn polite. I tell you, cripple or no cripple, I'd like to see him hung up by the thumbs. And, pass or no pass, I'd fire him out of lines for good and all. But how is he treated?"

The other man laughed.

"As for the colonel," Boone pursued, "he's not much better, to my way of thinking. How did he treat that order from headquarters to-day to look out

for Van Dorn? Said he'd see it was carried out — to-morrow. He's unfit to command. To-morrow! As 'Old Sugar-Coated' says, 'You can't afford to let to-morrow care for itself.' By that time — Why, we might all be gobbled up by then!"

The other kicked his heels. "What if we were? Anything's better than this devilish sitting still around a lot of horse-meat and crackers and beans and tin cans and shoddy blankets and saltpetre, that comes in one day and goes out the next."

"Did you ever figure what that horse-meat and crackers and tin cans is worth. Close to a million dollars, by my reckoning. They're the supplies for forty thousand men or more south of us. Rather good to have someone 'sitting around' them, with the rebs as thick as flies."

"Oh, I suppose so. But it's slow. Anything for a change, I say."

"Well, let me get out of here before your 'change' comes. I've got some papers that I've put a lot of hard work into, and the Johnnies wouldn't object at all to reading them." Boone gave a tremendous yawn. "And now — if you don't mind — get off that bed and out of this room. I'm going to try to get some sleep, and right away."

The officer left with a remark about "unsociable brutes." In five minutes Boone was snoring.

When he first realised that he had been awakened, he cast a half-opened eye at the window, and, seeing

there only a frame of the gray blackness of an ugly dawn, muttered to himself about the poor taste of those who made his door-step the place for an altercation at such an unseemly hour. Then he turned his head on the pillow. But the dispute below the window grew louder, and when he had tried in vain to close his ears to it, he got out of bed, slipped on his trousers and coat, and stumbled down the stairs to the street door.

A sentry stood there parleying with two men. Apparently they were in bad temper and he in little better. Boone spoke to them sharply. "What are you talking to that guard for? Get out of here!"

"Get out yourself, you damn Yankee!" one of the men snapped back.

Boone made a step forward. "Put that man under arrest," he ordered.

But the sentry lost the chance to do so, and his musket in the same instant. The two men leaped at him and bore him to the ground. As Boone jumped to his aid three more men ran around the corner of the house. And by then it was become evident even to his sleep-clouded eyes that the strangers wore gray uniforms. For a second he stood in astonishment, then whirled about, stepped back into the house, and flung to the door. He had bolted it and was speeding up-stairs before the newcomers were at the steps. His papers! That was his first thought. They lay on the mantel-shelf. He

held them a moment undecided. But a yell below resolved him. He crammed them into the heart of what remained of a fire on the hearth, and ran back to the window of his room.

At sight of his head a shout went up from the street, "Come out here! We've got the town!"

The street was swarming with gray coats. There was shouting now and the sound of shots came from the far end of the street. But of sign of organised resistance there was none, and the glint of arms was at every corner. Boone believed that the truth had been told him. So much for the disobedience of orders by a colonel who once before had surrendered his post without a blow.

He cast a look toward the fireplace. Smoke was curling from the papers. Another demand rose from the street. "Come out here, you Yankee, or we'll pull you out!" He called back to make time. Then a little ruddy glow on the wall by his side gave him the signal he waited for, and he drew in his head. The papers were blazing. They would be of no service to any one in another minute. He pulled on his boots and stirred the charred mass on the hearth. Below they were battering on the door. He went down and opened it. They greeted his appearance with a shout. In another minute he was being marched up the street toward the hotel.

At the door of the front parlour, a man with a musket brought them to a halt. Van Dorn, the

rebel leader who had taken the town, was examining the Union colonel, and the orders were that no one was to be brought in. Boone was shoved ahead to the next door. It opened into a small room. There they left him. "Stick your head out the window, Yank, and you'll get it shot off!" was the warning. Then the door was closed on him, and he was alone. The room was dark, the blinds were lowered, and prudence suggested it would be as well not to attempt to raise them. He found a chair after much stumbling. The partition walls on either side of him were thin, and through these came the sound of conversation.

From the back room he fancied he distinguished a woman's voice. That should be the girl who had come into town last evening. She spoke so low that only occasional words were clear. But the voice in conversation with her was stronger, and he made out that an argument was in progress, and caught the drift of it. A man was pleading with her. He reasoned patiently and calmly, and her protests were faint. Presently his voice fell, and he said something of which only a few words were plain. But those were past misunderstanding and, after a little silence, Boone heard her answer, and knew that she had yielded. He heard the man say something briskly. Then he left the room, and his footsteps passed Boone's door. After a minute his voice sounded in the room on the other side. There was

another brief argument there, and again the man's footsteps went by the door. Then the man and the girl were talking again.

But Boone had no chance to hear more. He was ordered to come out, and next he was standing in front of Van Dorn.

The Confederate leader was seated by a table, his muddy boots on a chair. On the table was a double sheet of closely written paper. He smoked while he turned the leaves of a letter-book. Boone recognised this as the record of the Captain's orders at Iuka and Corinth.

Van Dorn tapped the book with a forefinger. "Interesting reading," he remarked. "I'll keep it to remember your chief by." Boone's smile was rather sour. The other laughed. "But I won't bother you that way. We're going to get out of here as soon as we finish our little bonfire. We've got about a thousand bales of cotton blazing down the street and a rather considerable lot of mixed goods to help along the fire." He picked up the sheet of paper and read from it. It was an inventory of the supplies and a statement of the Union forces at Holly Springs. "All down, you see," he remarked. He laughed. "Now about you," he said, suddenly, looking up. "How do you feel about going free?"

"What do you mean?"

"What I say. We'll parole you. We've paroled a good many of your men already."

Boone's silence quickened the other's temper. "But you want to be right smart about it. Answer me!"

"I will. I won't give you my parole. You want it too badly."

"You'll soon wish that you had the chance to give it."

Boone did not answer, and the demand was repeated. "Will you give your parole?"

"No — I told you I wouldn't."

"Very well. We'll attend to you later." Van Dorn shouted for the sentry at the door. Boone was pushed into the next room. There he sat down again. It was a dreary wait. From the back room there was no sound. He heard Van Dorn's voice and the voices of others in the front room for awhile; then they ceased. Presently, the noise of trampling down the hall. The dead silence which followed informed him that the Confederate leader had gone out of the building. But he was reasonably sure that the door of his own room was guarded, and that, if he showed his head, it would be to furnish a target. So he sat and made guesses at what was going on. With every burst of yelling in the streets he braced himself for a fulfilment of the threat. But no one came near him, and two hours dragged by. At last he ventured to raise the blind at one of the windows. It was broad daylight. Men were pouring up the side streets, mov-

ing toward the eastern end of the town. A great pall of smoke floated over the house-tops, and he could hear occasional shouting. But apparently he was forgotten, and he watched from the window for half an hour, and at last was sure of one thing. The Confederates were making ready to leave the town. With that thought and the philosophic reflection that, having been overlooked where he was, he had better remain there, he returned to the chair, and tried to draw comfort from a crushed cigar while he pondered on the conversation overheard.

A very muddy rider on a worn horse entered Holly Springs that morning, an hour ahead of the column of Federal reinforcements, and pulled up to take count of the smouldering remains of Southern jubilation. Then he rode on and, by and by, Boone and he were facing each other on the steps of the hotel.

"I'm about four or five hours too late from the looks of things," David remarked.

"It depends upon the point of view," returned Boone. "From mine — which was that window yonder for almost the length of time you mention — you had all the best of it. Anyhow — "

"Well?"

"It wouldn't have made much difference if you had come yesterday afternoon."

"Why not? I have orders."

"For the colonel? Well, you'll find him somewhere about town. That's the point. If you had had those orders then and delivered them into his hands I don't think it would have saved the place. He showed what he was made of at Iuka, two months ago. It was bound to be the same story here."

David twisted his lips grimly. "It couldn't be worse," he said. "But come and help me find him. I'll give him these orders, anyway." He slid from his horse and shook himself.

"You know what this means?" he said, as they walked up the street.

"The end of the movement on Vicksburg for the time being. The Captain will have to fall back until supplies come down, and his line of communications is safe. Everything is against this campaign. Won't Rawlins swear? And Sherman —"

"Sherman will have to go it alone down there for awhile. But only for awhile, I tell you. The Captain had made up his mind to have Vicksburg. He'll have it whether it takes a month or a year."

Boone nodded. Then he dove into his coat and pulled out a paper. "By the way," he said, "here is something interesting. A complete itemised account of our supplies that were, and men that are, at this place. Van Dorn read some of it to me at that little interview we had. He vamoosed in such a hurry when he heard our reinforcements

were coming that he forgot it. I picked it up from the table when he left. The question is, how did he get it?"

David held out a hand, and unfolded the paper. He glanced at it carelessly. Then his fingers closed convulsively on it, but this his companion did not see.

"Well," Boone asked, "what do you make of it?"

"Of this? Oh, not much. It's — it's curious, though, isn't it? What are you going to do with it?"

"I thought of giving it to the colonel, but I changed my mind. It isn't any good now, except as evidence. If we could catch the fellow who gave the information — "

"Yes, but not unless you caught him," David echoed. "And you haven't caught him."

"Caught him? Certainly not. Nobody's seen this paper yet. It's too late anyhow, now."

"Yes, yes, of course." David slowly refolded the paper. He remarked after a moment, "I am going back to Oxford to-morrow — unless orders change. I believe this paper ought to be there. Suppose I take it with me and report?"

"Go ahead. I don't care. Headquarters is where it belongs."

David put the paper into his pocket. To Boone's steady stream of talk as they walked on he made

little response. But at a corner he halted abruptly. "Hold on!" he exclaimed. "I won't go to the colonel's just yet. I have a message to deliver, and the colonel will keep, as things stand. Mr. Mayhew? Is he in town?"

"He was." Boone did not try to conceal his disgust. "He was among his own when the rebels held the place and —" He broke off abruptly. "Yes, he's here. I saw him after they left. If you're worrying, let me say that not a hair of his head was harmed."

David took no notice of the implication. "I will see him now," he said. "He has urgent business to attend to. Suppose you go back, old man. I'll join you in your room in an hour. I'll find the colonel all right."

Mr. Mayhew, seated by a table in a front room, raised his head quickly as David entered, and shot out a hand in welcome. "Why," he cried, "I'm mighty glad you've come. I suppose you've brought soldiers, good Union soldiers? We've had company, unpleasant visitors, you know — and —" He stopped.

David was standing stiffly a few feet away. "I have ordered a horse and wagon for you," he said, quietly. "They will be at this door in half an hour. You will be ready to leave then."

Mr. Mayhew stared. "Leave? Where do you suppose I am going?"

"I don't know that. Wherever you choose. So that it is outside the Federal lines."

Still Mr. Mayhew stared. Then he laughed. "To be sure. But I don't believe I quite understand what you're talking about. Sit down and explain."

David took two steps forward and laid a hand upon the table top. "I do not know what these papers here are," he said. "But I have something in my pocket which you wrote. If you insist I will show it to you. It was left behind by Van Dorn. To-morrow it will be in the hands of headquarters. But *not* till to-morrow."

Mr. Mayhew again moistened his lips with his tongue and for a moment not a muscle moved. As he drew up his crippled leg slowly, his upper lip lifted, and beneath his lowered lids showed that strange phosphorescent gleam. But for a little while he was silent. Then, "Oh," he said, and dropping the words, "So it is that way. It was very thoughtful on your part to come to me first." His hand slipped down to the crutch resting against the chair and fingered it. There was something in the movement which made David's muscles stiffen. But the crippled figure hoisted itself in the chair. "When did you say my wagon would be here?"

"In half an hour."

"So soon! It is short notice. But I can be ready — if I must. Is there anything else?"

"No." David turned on his heel.

Mr. Mayhew spoke softly. "There's this," he said, and chuckled. "Don't forget it. You might have saved yourself some trouble, and perhaps your people might not have lost their supplies here if — if you had read the paper in your pocket on the day you carried it for me down to Oxford. For it was a copy of the memorandum which you now make so much of, and perfectly plain. But you brought it back, brought it back and never broke the seal." He heaved a sigh. "It's your one failing, David, let me tell you. The damned thing which I suppose you call honour."

That was the last word David ever heard his uncle speak. It was the only time he remembers to have heard him utter a profanity. He strode from the house with the soft voice in his ears, without a backward look, and walked far up the street and out to where the country road began, swinging along at a rapid pace. And so back again to Boone's door.

At the door a darkey swept off his battered hat and held out a letter. "Dis yer's fo' Mista Capt'n Foad," he explained.

"That's my name." David took the letter. "Who's it from?"

"Don't know dat, Capt'n. Gem'lem guv it t' m' while 'go, back th' road a ways."

David tore open the envelope. The note inside was in his uncle's handwriting. "David," it ran, "one good turn deserves another. You'll be interested perhaps to hear that Miss Shirley is travelling to Vicksburg with a gentleman. Major Randolph, I think, is his name. It gives me pain to say that our worthy neighbour, the Doctor, has been badly wounded. It is a pity you were not more forbearing a little while ago. I have faint recollection of a letter from Miss Shirley for you which came into my hands a few weeks since. But you were so abrupt — you really were, David — that you quite drove the mention of it out of my head, and I have lost the letter itself. Very careless of me, but you must be patient, as you always were before, and doubtless Major Randolph would say it was as well anyhow."

When David walked up to Boone's room and pushed open the door he found Boone was stretched in a rocker, his feet cocked up. The latter said, "Hello," and made no further remark after a look at David's face. But he wondered a good deal. David lighted a pipe and flung himself on the bed. For awhile there was silence, and this grew into such length that at last David was aroused. He cast a look of inquiry upon his companion.

"Well?"

Boone took his pipe from his mouth, and his lips parted. But he quickly put the pipe back again, and pulled on it vigorously. David, on an elbow,

watched him, and again the pipe came out, and its holder rubbed the bowl with the palm of his hand. "Well?" David repeated, and this time Boone tried to laugh it off. But it was a failure, and David remarked, "Come, you've got something on your mind. What is it?"

"Nothing."

"Yes, it is. Speak it out."

"I have something to say," Boone acknowledged. He did not look up. "Something I meant to tell you before. But, the fact is, I don't know where to begin."

"At the start. Is it unpleasant? It is or you wouldn't have any trouble."

"It's — oh, the devil!" Boone shook his pipe. "Why, here I've gone and made a mountain out of what is only — rather odd. You probably know something about it. A lady and two men drove into Holly Springs yesterday. They were coming down from Columbus, and there was a break on the railroad."

"Well?"

"One of the men was Major Randolph."

"But you said a *lady*."

"Yes, I did. She — Well, the other man who accompanied her was that old fellow who used to work on Doctor Shirley's place."

"'Lias? Oh!" David's eyes opened wide, and he remained staring at Boone for a moment. Then

his brow contracted, and the seconds ticked off. And at last he said, "The lady was Miss Shirley." He spoke so calmly that astonishment checked the reply on Boone's tongue. So they sat until David asked, "Did you speak to her? Why did she come here?"

Boone answered, quickly. "No, I didn't get the chance to speak to them. But I know that they are bound for the South — Vicksburg, I think. They came into town for the night."

David did not appear to hear. He was regarding his pipe which he turned slowly in his fingers. A feeling possessed Boone that all this was known to his companion before. For himself he had guessed at a good deal on the day when David spoke of writing a letter; yet he had looked for something different when he should tell him what he just had told. He struck a match. David started and spoke. "She was not hurt?"

"Hurt? By the rebels, you mean? Why, no. The fact is — Oh, no, she is all right."

"Then she is still here?" David cried, and sat upright suddenly.

It was borne in upon Boone that he should have begun his story at the other end. "They were going to Vicksburg. I thought I said that," he explained. "I don't know why they were going there, but — "

"But I do. Where is she? Where is she now?"

"She is not here. The railroad line was cut below

the town also. They could not get out that way. So Major Randolph thought best — and they rode toward Potonoc, with Van Dorn, this morning."

"This morning?" David repeated. "She went away with —" He slid to the floor and walked over to the window. There he stood, looking down on the street. When he turned again his face made Boone wonder. "Major Randolph is a cousin of Miss Shirley's," he said, quietly. "You did not know that. And they went to Vicksburg to her father. He has been wounded. I just learned of it. But you could not know that either. It is very simple when one understands, you see. You do understand?"

Boone nodded. David caught up his hat. "I believe I will go out for awhile," he said. "Don't," as Boone rose, "don't come with me. I'll be back soon."

XXIII

Mr. lincoln's key

CHRISTMAS Day in Vicksburg, and thousands watching from the high bluffs. North, a few miles above where the river made a great bend, pillars of smoke smirched the sky. From Memphis slowly down the river for days a fleet of transports and gunboats had been moving — Sherman on his way. Now he was come. Vicksburg knew for what, and was ready for him. Mr. Lincoln had said, "Vicksburg is the key to the Mississippi. We must have it in our pocket." Miles of fortifications, raised above and around the town, dared the men whom Mr. Lincoln had sent to take the key. From the high Walnut Hills on the north to far below the city where the bluffs sheered from the river, was piled battery on battery, and on the ridges to the east other embankments, each with its separate defiance. On this Christmas Day Vicksburg, looking at the pillars of smoke, declared, "Here will the Yankees learn that the South holds her own."

Back of Vicksburg, on the western slopes of a high ridge, was a house which had sheltered two generations of one family, and was the home of a third. It was a double house, larger than its neighbours, and it was painted white and had a porch with high columns and a veranda and a wooden fan-work above that, and behind it was another porch. The big room in front, with its prim old furniture and curious knicknacks and its wall-paper of pictures taken from " Paul and Virginia," had long been the delight of children for miles around. Breezes from the Walnut Hills to the west cooled it. From it could be seen the court-house on the hill in the city, its cupola and steeple above the open bell-tower shining in the sun. The noise of the city came but faintly to it, through its garden of magnolias and gums and its double row of china-trees. Plantations stretched beyond it on the other side of the successive ridges, — plantations of cotton, with here and there an old gin, and scattered cabins, or a more pretentious house set near the old road to Jackson, and standing out starkly, for the trees had been cut down on every exposed place to give open ground for the defence.

The master of the big white house long ago had been carried to where his father, and his father before him, lay, and since then the negroes, whose quarters showed through a group of magnolias, had known only the will of the daughter and of Miss

Celia, whose proud boast it was that the Pembertons and Shirleys had given more soldiers and lawyers to their country than any two families of the South. One of her name now held the chief command in Vicksburg. Another, her nephew, recently serving with Forrest, was the colonel of a regiment in the city; and it is not unlikely that Miss Celia's confidence in the impregnability of the place was rooted rather in these two facts than in all the frowning lines of guns with twenty thousand men behind them which defended Vicksburg.

It was from a night of work in these defences that, on this Christmas morning, came that nephew riding along the bare road and into the hollow among the trees which girdled his cousin's place. There, dismounting, he walked to the end of the porch where a girl stood, looking toward the hills to the north. "Lee," he said, "I have come for breakfast."

She turned and gave him her hand. "I was hoping you would," she answered. "And this is Christmas. I give you my best wishes. I am sorry it is nothing more."

"Why, *you* are here," he returned. "This is the first Christmas I have been able to say that. I thought of it a great many times last night when I was down to Warrenton. And when I come back tonight — if I am able to — you will still be here. The Yankees cannot take you from me."

Her face was turned from him with a quick little movement, and he understood. He slipped an arm through hers. In his happiness he had forgotten her sorrow. Four days before, they had arrived in the city to find that she was too late, that her father had given for his cause the most that man has to give. Her black-robed figure, as it moved so silently about the house, had wrenched Philip's heart. From the moment at Gravois when he told her why he came for her, she had been this way. Except when she knelt beside the still form and kissed the forehead, and then gazed and gazed into the face whose folded lips seemed almost to answer her pleading, "Father! Father!" he had seen no tear. So now, when her face was turned again her eyes looked into his own with a brave smile, and she asked him, "They have come, then?"

"Yes — Sherman and his Yankee army and the fleet were reported above Chickasaw Bayou last night. They will probably land to-day. But they are a good many miles away, and we don't intend to allow them to get much nearer. We are almost ready for them. I must leave again in an hour. Come and eat Christmas breakfast with me. I may not be able to have another breakfast with you soon."

But it was not to be that way. Vicksburg was better guarded than even its defenders believed; and December passed and January came in, and still the

city reared its bold front above the river and defied its enemies, and hundreds perished in the swamps to the north and on the sides of the bluffs. Then on the last day of the first month of the new year, Vicksburg heard that the beginning of its real struggle was at hand. The Captain had arrived at Young's Point. The self-important general who had met his match in the staunch old admiral of the Union fleet was deprived of his command. New plans were to be tried to put the key of the Mississippi into Mr. Lincoln's pocket.

Vicksburg knew of these things, as it knew of what things followed almost, as it seemed to its enemies, before they happened. They laughed in Vicksburg then at the projects of the bearded man with sober eyes who had set himself to do what the "Bear" and a fleet of ironclads apparently had shown to be impossible.

Miss Celia, when she heard Philip's news, contemptuously declared, "Let them dig their canal. The Mississippi has chosen its path for a good many years. I hardly believe it will change its ways because this Yankee farmer says it must." Miss Celia had been told about the Gravois days by Lee, and to her the Captain remained a farmer to the last.

Beatrix laughed. "But, Aunt Celia, a farmer ought to know how to dig better than anybody else. And just think how terrible it would be if he did

steal our river away from us! What would we do without water? And what would he do with it?"

"Give it to Mr. Lincoln," Miss Celia suggested. "From all I have heard a little water would not be amiss among the Yankees."

"They will really come to like it if they stay here long enough," Beatrix rejoined. "Philip says there is hardly a yard of dry land along the river above, except on the levees. Lee, when next you see your Captain he probably will have wet feet."

But Lee did not smile. "I have heard," she said, "that there is a great deal of sickness among them. Smallpox and fever. Do you remember, Beatrix, that drive we took when I was here four years ago? The swamps we saw! I can't forget them. And now the country is flooded, and they are living in water night and day."

"They need not live there a day longer than they desire," remarked Miss Celia. "Let them go back the way they came. We do not want them. If they *will* stay they deserve what they get."

Lee was silent. She was thinking of what her father had suffered while the fever sapped his strength hour by hour until it left him nothing to fight with against the torture of his wound.

A hint of her thoughts was in her face, and Beatrix wound an arm about her, and reminded her, "Lee, they have their own hospitals. They can send their sick and wounded away where they

can have fresh air and everything they need. Our soldiers have to be brought here, into the city. I was at one of the hospitals to-day. They are beginning to be crowded."

Miss Celia's eyes darkened. "Yes, but we will always have men enough to drive these Yankees back. They can dig and plan till doomsday; they will be whipped every time."

The Yankees did dig, and they were whipped. The first time it was the river. The Captain's ditch was a failure. Perhaps he expected nothing better of it and allowed it to be undertaken only to employ his men while his army was strengthened and he made other plans. The second time that he tried his hand at digging, his enemies drove him back. Porter was sent with his gunboats to find an opening along the tortuous channels of bayous and lakes and creeks far north of Vicksburg and so come down behind the city. While he threaded these, in front of him, out of reach of his guns, under Confederate officers hundreds of unwilling slaves and some who worked willingly, cut down trees and blocked the waterways. When the admiral's boats cleared these trees away it was to find the guns of a newly built fort levelled on the narrow approach, and no dry ground anywhere from which to make an assault. So ended the third attempt on Vicksburg, and Vicksburg laughed again.

But also it began to wonder. This man who had

come against it was very persistent. Stories were repeated of his earlier days. It was said he never gave up, once he started in to do anything.

But before this the city had a fright. A little ram ran past the batteries in the mists of a bright morning and dealt great damage. *The Queen of the West* she was called. The Confederates remembered her by the great hole she stove in one of their gunboats tied against the bank. Porter, recalling her success, sent another craft down the river one night, and the guns above and the guns beneath the city opened on her, and an avalanche of iron beat upon her sides, and she did not answer. Red fire pouring from her funnels, vast clouds of black smoke trailing behind her, she swept on with the current. Below they saw her coming, and to save it from recapture, blew up the great Union ironclad *Indianola* which they had captured.

The next morning they did not dare show their faces because of what they had done. For the invincible craft which had run the batteries was grounded on a shoal, and they perceived that she was a raft of logs, three hundred feet long, with wheelhouses and a formidable casemate of planks out of which wooden guns were thrust. Her smokestacks were hogsheads with a flaming kettle of pitch and oakum in each. At her bow was a flag with skull and crossbones on it. Her wheelhouse bore the legend, "*Deluded Rebels, Cave In.*" After that,

it is said that the gunners on the Vicksburg heights when they sighted a shadow on the river at night, would advise one another, "Let th' Yank have th' first shot. It ain't right for us to be doing all th' shooting."

But there was shooting enough done, and to Vicksburg fell its share. North of the city the guns made the air tremble again and again; along the dry ground between the ridges within the fortifications wound long lines of men. Those who moved north went with jogging step; those coming toward the city most often were with broken ranks, and among these scores of men with arms tied up and bandaged faces. And then, covered wagons, and groans from these which sounded in one's ears long after the wagons had rumbled on.

Lee had seen the wagons go by and knew what they held. One evening Philip found her sitting at the end of the porch alone. A passion vine stirred its leaves at the touch of a gentle breeze which sifted through the magnolias and from the north bore a faint noise like distant thunder. It had been warm that day and the sun had shone, and now the sky overhead was flushed with its reflection. He came over and sat down on the edge of the porch by her chair, and leaned his back against a pillar. He was satisfied with the welcoming smile she gave him, and in silence they watched the fading glow together.

Then she began to speak about the wounded men she had seen, and he answered, "That is all part of war. We are losing no more men than the Yankees. And each of us has his chance."

"But when his chance is taken from him —" She caught herself and pressed her hands together. "He never has another," she said, softly. "And everything goes on — without him."

"Yes — it goes on. But not one of those men would have it stop because he couldn't fight any more."

"But it is cruel. So cruel and hard."

After a minute, he said, slowly, "It is hard, but the hardest part must be — when you know your chance is going — to realise that you could have done better."

"If you have done what seemed right —" she began.

But he interposed, "No, no, that is not all. Sometimes things are settled for us. We only know this when we look back. Then we wish — I hope that I won't have to think I could have done better. I hope I won't."

"Why, of course you won't," she answered, wonderingly. "Please don't speak that way. And nothing is going to happen to you."

"Something might happen to me, why not?" Then his voice changed, and he said, carelessly, "I am like the rest. And I reckon I could stand it as

well as most. Perhaps better than some, for I've got pretty good pluck when I know it's needed." He laughed. "'Deed I have." Then he hooked his hands about his knee and looked across at the hills with their bare tops and curving lines of entrenchments. Presently he went on, "Sometimes I've wondered whether if I had known you before — a long time ago — it would have been — different. It would be very hard when — when my chance is gone — if I should think that it might have been different," he finished, wistfully.

His boyish face was raised, but not to hers, and she knew he did not expect her to answer. A great pity flooded her heart. He loved her. Yes, and he would never cease to hope, not until the very end. It was in his voice, in his eyes, in every one of those little tendernesses with which he had surrounded her since he brought her from Gravois. Yet he had never spoken of it after that one day. And now he only told her that he wondered whether anything he could have done would have helped him with her. If his chance was to be taken from him —!

Her eyes were misty. She bent toward him and touched his head. It was the touch of a mother for her child, but neither of them knew that. "Philip," she said, softly.

He looked up and into her face, and for an instant was dumb. Then, "Lee!" he cried, and caught her hands in his. How could she tell him the truth then?

How tell him what she knew when all the joy of his heart was in his eager eyes, and his lips were parted to say over and over again that one word, "Lee! Lee! Lee!" lower and lower until she barely heard it.

For three days after that evening she did not see him. Early in the morning he had said good-bye. He was assigned to duty above the city. "Dear," he said, "I dreamed last night that you told me you loved me." Then with a whimsical smile, "Now wasn't that *au*-dacious of me?" He held her hands in his, wide apart, looking up at her from the step, bare-headed, his face glowing. "But maybe it was true?" he asked. She could not answer, though he waited, then drew her hands together and kissed them. "It *was* true," he said. "It was to me. I knew it was when I opened my eyes and saw the sun. I knew it when I heard your voice. I will know it always. And to-night I will dream it again. Then, when I come back you will tell me it *is* true, won't you? Won't you, sweetheart?" Beatrix suddenly stood in the doorway, and he dropped her hands. "Say that you love me. Say it to yourself, dear," he whispered. "I will hear you."

There was fierce fighting in the swamps and flooded land about Steele's Bayou to the north of the city. Admiral Porter and his gunboats for a

week had been working through the twistings and tangles of the creeks and arms of the bayou, while their enemies felled trees in front and trees behind, and the low-hanging limbs tore the smoke-stacks and the upper works from the steamers, and smashed small boats, and the mesh of wiry water willows laid hold of the keels. And at last the fleet was tied up, and could move neither forward nor backward, and Porter was at bay with his great guns almost useless because of the banks, and his enemies closing in on him. Then came Sherman, paddling in a canoe, almost alone, wading through the swamps. And with his infantry drove off the enemy which had fallen on the helpless fleet from every point of dry land. There were strange sights in those days among the swamps. Men to their hips in water sawing at logs which no one could see. A dozen jack-tars wielding the broom, and snakes and scorpions and bats for refuse to be swept from the decks. All about them trees growing from the swirling current, and at times a darkness from the foliage overhead so dense that fires had to be lighted to work by. In one of the darkest of these places on the night the brave Porter found himself tied hard and fast Philip came suddenly upon an old acquaintance and had a few words with him before one side spied the other, and the rifles began to crack, and they were enemies again. He told Lee about it the next evening when he was back again.

"David?" she said, and repeated it as if there could be no stranger name. "Yes. He asked about you. He knew you were here."

"Oh, yes, he must have known I was here."

"I thought you had written to him until he asked about your father. He was wounded himself, he told me, at Corinth, and has been away from the mails so long he was eager for news. I told him what I knew."

She stared at him so curiously that he caught her arm. "What is wrong?" he asked. "David you mean? Oh, he is all right now. You should have seen him. I thought you must know that." Then, after a halt, "And I forgot you were such old friends."

"Yes, old friends," she echoed. Then she saw that there was a shadow in his eyes, and smiled. "David is my oldest friend," she said. "I always must think of him that way even though he is fighting against us."

The shadow was lifted from Philip's eyes. "I like him, too," he answered. "He will be our friend too, when this war is over. I can even forgive him all those days when he was with you and I was not. Because — Can't you guess why?"

"Yes, yes," she answered, hastily, but he would not forego the joy of saying it. "Because he was so blind, so *very* blind, dear."

Did she tremble when his arm crept around her

and he drew her to him? If she did he knew why this was, and held her closer until she slipped away from him.

He had forgotten his meeting with David, when she spoke, very quietly, "You said he was — away a long time. When was that?"

"He? David? Oh, that must have been — let me see! He was wounded when at Corinth, I said. It must have been before he was at Holly Springs."

"Where?"

"Holly Springs."

"Was he there when we were there?"

"No." He laid his hand over hers. "He must have reached there the day after we left, though when we talked I didn't think that we had passed through there, too."

That night Beatrix passing Lee's door paused and stood listening. Then she went into the room. Lee was by the open window. She stole over and curved an arm about her shoulders. But Lee did not speak and her hands lay loosely in her lap. After a little while Beatrix said, "Philip tells me he saw David."

The hands in the lap closed on each other. "Yes, he told me. I wish David knew —" She did not say what it was she wished he knew, and Beatrix did not ask her. But a little later, when she bent and kissed her good night, Beatrix whispered, "I am going out to Mrs. Ives's to-morrow for a day or two. We have known her a long time, and I know

she hopes I will come. She has few friends here since the war began. She has a son with the North. Perhaps I can find a way to let David know what — what you want, dear."

Except for the uniforms there was nothing to speak of war on the headquarters' boat at Milliken's Bend on this night. Fiddles were squeaking, billowy skirts swept the floor of the main cabin, laughing eyes looked up into their partners' faces. The army and navy had joined hands, and the younger officers were in their glory. The country round Vicksburg might be under water, it did not dampen the gaiety of those of its daughters who were here to-night. With the fair visitors from up the river and the east, they found squires, a dozen apiece, whose one thought was to forget all about war and its duties in the polka and the waltz.

Earlier in the evening healths had been drunk. The Captain, lured from his concealment at the far end of the room, had given them the toast, "Liberty and Lincoln, God gave them both to us. Let us fight for them." Afterward he had slipped away, and not all the clapping of hands brought him again to the front. At a small table in a corner of the ladies' cabin, he sat himself down and from his pocket pulled a map. With a pencil he began to draw lines. A few daring spirits among the visitors ventured into his retreat. One of them be-

sought him to be her partner in the Virginia Reel just forming. "My dear lady," he answered, "I have a dance here of my own. If you will promise to lead me through that, I will be proud to be your partner now."

"What dance is it?" she inquired and peeped over his shoulder. "Oh — a horrid map!"

"Yes, a map," he said, with twinkling eyes. "And I am trying to decide upon the figures for my dance. Are you ready to promise your assistance?"

She pouted. "I know a way into Vicksburg," she said. "But only a woman could find it. The Southern gentlemen are very gallant." Then she turned her shoulder on the Captain, for he had discovered something on his map of great interest, and was not looking at her at all.

An hour later McPherson, passing the door in front of which he had paused many times before, stopped, then hastened to a table and filled a glass with champagne. He bore it in to the Captain. "You are wearing yourself out," he said. "Drink this. It will do you good. Then come and join us."

The Captain leaned back in his chair and regarded his friend with gravely smiling face. "Mac," he answered, "that wine won't do me any good. I have work here. If you will be of service, get me half a dozen cigars — big ones. They'll be the

best help I can have. When I've finished them, perhaps, I'll see my way clear."

The music went on, midnight struck on the bells, and still he sat, drifts of smoke about his head dropped to one side, his shoulders hunched over the table where the papers and the map were spread.

Twice David came in to see him and went away with the quiet answer in his ears, "Nobody can aid me to untangle this. Go and enjoy yourself."

But David, for reasons best known to himself, found little pleasure in the evening's gaiety. More than once it had been impressed upon him that he was a graceless partner in the dance. So with a gaze that took small account of the smiling faces and softly gleaming shoulders which passed and repassed him, he stood at one side and knew that he would be glad when it was all over. A guilty start he gave when a voice behind him declared, "It was a yawn that time, Captain Ford. I was watching, and I saw it."

He faced about. "I beg your pardon." Then, "Beatrix!" he cried.

She curtsied. "Surely it is Beatrix, unless I have changed my name with my gown."

"But this is not Vicksburg."

"No, Vicksburg is down the river a piece. That little piece of water which you want so badly, so very badly, to pass over. But it is not so hard to go up-stream. So — here I am."

"But I don't understand."

"You never will. It is sad, too. I thought you had learned something that evening in Corinth." A smile hovered on her lips. "It will have to satisfy you that I am here, the guest of a lady who was duly invited on your boat this evening. I am here on promise of good behaviour. So you need not be afraid of me."

"I am not afraid. But —"

"No buts," she warned. "Perhaps I came because we were tired of waiting for you in Vicksburg. Perhaps, to see how you Yankees dance."

"Then," said David, "you will allow me to show you how one of them dances."

"No, I do not want to dance. But I would rather like to talk. And it is warm here. Do not boats have decks — outside?"

He offered her his arm. "We can find one, I am sure."

But after they had discovered a place to her liking and he was standing beside her near the rail, he fell into a silence which was the more strange, since she began to talk of Lee, and there were many times when he might have asked her what was in his mind. She told him of Lee's arrival, and he did not reply. Of her father's death, and he said only, "Yes, I was sure of that," and turned his face away. Then she began to speak of Philip, and she saw his face again; and to herself she de-

clared, "I knew it! I knew it!" Which was stranger still, since David was sure face never told less than his did then. He was looking down the river where, over the banks of the great bend, now and then a twinkling light shone from the city; and her voice seemed to come from far off, though he heard every word.

Then he was aware that she had given a little cry of dismay, and he shook himself free of his moodiness.

"It was nothing after all," she told him, in answer to his question. "I was rather curious about a friend of yours who should be here. And now I fear it is too late to have you point him out to me."

"Whom do you mean?"

"That tall man, — the one you talk about so much, — the doctor."

"Boone? He is not a doctor now. He has a place on the staff. But he is not here. He went to Memphis two days ago."

"That is curious," she said. "Always in some other place. Tell me, is he as busy as ever? The last time, you remember, it was the same way. He could not spare the time for — frivolities. I am beginning to think — "

"What?" asked David, when she halted, and she answered, indolently, "That he does not exist."

"But he does. He is very real, and very much in earnest."

"So? So?" She laughed doubtfully. "But he must be very different from most men, none the less."

"Why?"

"For one thing, because he doesn't care for women's company. You told me — What was it?"

David's gaze searched her face, and he said, slowly, "There is one woman. I believe he cares very much for her. But she, I do not know what she thinks."

Beatrix leaned her chin in her palms, her elbows on the rail, her face turned slightly away from him, and he could see only the rounded outline of her cheek on which the lashes lay. The paddles of a steamer beat faintly out of the darkness up-stream as the music in the cabin ceased; then came a ripple of soft laughter from the cabin and the hum of conversation. Yet still she did not speak, and he said (and was it of Boone he was speaking?), "If a woman knew that a man loved her, Beatrix, could she not forget that he had not — seen some things in the way he should?"

"She can easily enough forget," she answered, "if she does not love him. But, if she does love him, he must never let her remember that there

was a yesterday until he came. He must show that his love for her is as great — as great as her own."

"But how is he to know that she loves him when everything is against him? Perhaps, some one else, another man who loves her, is with her. And she may be where — where he cannot go to her."

She dropped her hands and threw her head far back. Her eyes rested on him, reproachful, yet the reproach was almost tender. "David," she said, "David, can't you answer that question for yourself? If he loves her, he must be willing to risk something. Look!" She stretched an arm toward the twinkling lights. "There is Vicksburg. Your Captain wants the city, but he will never take it as he is doing now. And your man is something like him. Wishing, worrying, planning. But too prudent! Too prudent, David! What is a rebuff! What if he does not know all that she knows! A woman worth having is worth a little daring. Love! David, do you know what love means? When your man has dared, then he may say he knows. And maybe he will learn her secret then."

XXIV

By way of the river

"IT was Boone she meant," David told himself when she was gone. "I was right. She is the girl. And I must let him know. Of course she was speaking of him." A dozen times he repeated this last statement. What doubt of it could there be? Yet he went back over their conversation. An absurd idea thrust itself upon him, absurd because she could not know what he knew. It drew his eyes many times to the high bluffs raised above the nearer banks of the rolling, muddy river. It put questions into his mind. If she had not meant Boone —? But what was the use of conjuring such possibilities? The fact remained: What he learned during those lonely hours in the hospital had only been that he might understand more clearly what was lost to him. Vicksburg might stand for ever or it might be taken to-morrow. It would not change this. Yet —? Then he would measure again the distance to the city with its tiers of earthworks, and walk away to plunge into the work which

went on without pause along the sodden levees and in the flooded fields about where the Union army camped.

They were heavy-handed, many of those water-soaked, clay-smeared, and sweating fellows, and no respecter of persons when dealing with the enemy. They foraged on the land wherever it raised itself above the flood and there was anything worth taking. Sherman's men, it was said, could catch and skin a hog while on the march without breaking step. A rough humour showed itself in many of their dealings. Boone one afternoon piloted a lank, lantern-jawed Mississippian to headquarters. The visitor led a flea-bitten mule by a long rope halter, and had a complaint to make. Sherman came by as he was repeating it, and the Captain called him over. "General, this man complains that he has been robbed of almost everything he owns. He says your men did it."

"Nonsense." Sherman eyed the man severely. "What do you say has been taken?"

"G'n'ral, they've done tuk everything. First they stole ma ducks an' chick-*ens*. Then they come an' robbed ma tater hole. Th' other night ma hawgs begun t' sque-*al* and foah I could get thyar, nothin' wuz left, seh, but th' troughs they aten outa. It wuz bright 'nough, G'n'ral, fur t' see th' soldiers runnin' away."

Under Sherman's observation at that moment

something transpired which made his face grow stern, then relax. "You saw them, did you? Well, did you see the hogs?"

"No, seh. But they done hev them somewhar 'bout them, fur they wuz go-an. Why, G'n'ral," fingering the frayed ends of the halter, "they'd have tuk ma ole mu-*el* 'f I hadn't done brought 't 'long with me t'day."

"What mule?"

"Why, this hyar one." The Mississippian turned about and pointed with a bony finger. Then his jaw fell, and he remained fixed in astonishment, his eyes bulging. From his hand the long halter ran to a small tree near by, and there its end was looped on a branch. From his gaping mouth came a hollow sound. "I'll be damned 'f they ain't done tuk th' mu-*el*," he groaned.

But if they took from those who had, and sometimes left little behind them, they spared many whose little meant much to its owners, and the Captain drove this lesson in with a discipline which was inexorable. They saw him do things, too, which worked more good with them than did any regulation; but these things he did in a fashion of his own.

Riding one day past a tumble-down cabin, a woman came out and stood by the doorway gazing at them silently. Her face, sallow and peaked, was lined with fever marks. A child clutched at her

skirts, and deep hollows were beneath its eyes. The Captain looked down at the woman, and rode on. But half a mile away he told Boone to go back and inquire about the woman. Boone reported that her husband had served with the Confederates until he was brought home wounded and sick. They were miserably poor.

"Send back a guard to protect the cabin," the Captain ordered.

A minute later he spoke again, "Send a surgeon to see what can be done for the sick man."

Hardly was the order delivered when he commanded, "And see that a dozen rations go with the surgeon. They can't live without food."

The following day a newspaper correspondent inquired about the incident. The Captain's memory, it seemed, did not serve him so far.

Perhaps he had done this in one of those spells of irresponsibility of which his enemies at Washington continued to complain. They urged his removal again and again, and the tall, lank man who watched over all with patient, sorrowful eyes, and whose hand held forgiveness always for South and North alike, asked them, "Why should he be removed?"

"Because he drinks too much."

Then the shadow lifted a moment from those wonderful eyes, and their owner replied, "Is it so? I have been wondering a long time where he got

his whiskey. Can you tell me? I should like to send a barrel of the same kind to each of our generals."

If the Captain drank too much, those who were about him did not know it. Yet silent he always was, except when he had something to say, and then it was seldom about himself he spoke.

He walked and rode among them, solid, erect, spattered with clay, his hat pulled down and battered, his head most often dropped a little forward, his bearded lips closed, his eyes grave but missing few things which they should see. And the word would pass along, "The old man is coming." Straightway men forgot that they were standing knee-deep in mud and that their shoulders ached, and that smallpox and fever cut them down, and that there was hardly a dry spot to lay a coffin in.

So the spring came, and still Vicksburg was on the east bank, the Captain on the west bank of the Mississippi. A mile of river flowed between, and mile on mile of tangled bayous and creeks and timbered swamps defied his efforts on the east and north. The river itself rose in a night and ended the labour of days and days which had been put upon another plan to get the gunboats and transports behind the city. In Washington, told of this latest failure, the President answered those who besieged him to remove so incompetent a com-

mander, "No, I have a sort of liking for him. I will try him a little longer."

The Captain, studying the river's work that day, pulled at his beard and pondered. When he turned away, a steely glint was in his eyes. That same night he called his generals and engineers together. "I have another plan for getting at the city," he said. "We will use the canal which is already dug for us."

Sherman wrinkled his brows. "Which is that?"

"The river itself. Protect our boats with cotton bales and whatever else will do, and run the batteries. One boat has done it. It can be done again."

Sherman's astonishment burst into speech. "Take a fleet of those paper-shell craft past the banks of big guns — at short range! They would stand no chance at all. Riddled? They'd be sunk before they were clear of the bend."

The Captain heard and was silent. One after another of the council condemned the suggestion, and his lips only closed tighter on the cigar. When they had finished he said, quietly, "I have not changed my mind. Be prepared to move down the river."

Sherman remained to remonstrate. "I shall give my heartiest support to whatever move you order, but I believe it is my duty to put my protest in writing!"

"Send along your protest," answered the Captain, with a smile. The letter was sent. Months afterward the Captain drew the letter from his pocket and returned it to its writer. The seal was unbroken. "Here is something to interest you," he remarked. Things had happened in the interval which made Sherman twist his mouth over the letter in a wry grin.

"It is a mistake," Boone declared to David, as they stood by the brink of the Yazoo and watched Porter's men at work on the steamers. "Very few of those boats will get below the city."

"Why do they say that? The *Queen of the West* went through."

"By sheer luck and audacity. The Confederates are better prepared now. I know a little about Vicksburg, and look at those bluffs!"

It was David's opportunity. "A girl once told me," he said, slowly, — "a Vicksburg girl she was, — that her city would never be taken by waiting and wishing, as she put it. She made a curious comparison, of a man in love with a woman. Something had sent him away from her, and — well, she said this woman could not mean much to him." Boone gave one quick look at David's face, then was staring out over the river. He made no reply. "And she was right," David added. "The man is unfair to himself and to her."

"What chance has he?" Boone said, sharply. "Tell me, what chance?"

"Beatrix said," returned David, "that the woman, if she were the man, would not ask that. That, if her love was worth having, it was worth daring something for."

Boone's face came about swiftly, and his lips parted. But as abruptly he looked away again, and when he spoke it was deliberately. "Perhaps you are right." His voice as much as his words forbade David to go on, and for awhile neither of them spoke. Then Boone began to talk again of running the batteries, and of what was being done to prepare for it. "These volunteers for the transports," he said. "I asked to-day to be allowed to go down on one of the steamers. But they have enough men already. It is my luck."

"Mine is better," David returned. "I applied two days ago. To-day I was assigned to the *Henry Clay.*"

Boone swung on his heel, and gripped his companion's shoulders. "Some day," he said, "I will know you as you are. Forgive me."

The gunboats with their convoy of steamers dropped into the current of the Mississippi one dark night in April, and, from a transport anchored in midstream as far down as was safe, Boone stood behind the Captain, and saw that wonderful sight,

and tried to make out the dim shape of the steamer *Henry Clay,* where David was, long after she had been swallowed up by the night.

First a row of dark bulks emerging from the shadows of the banks above and floating fast down and into the shadows, a glowworm of a lamp now and then sending back its winking message to the boat next astern. An orchestra of frogs cheeping and strumming from the nearest bank. Except for this, silence above and below, and the loom of the dark banks where the city hung in its great nest of forts unbroken by a point of light. They spoke in hushed voices around the Captain. Once a chair was knocked to the deck, and they softly cursed the offender. To them hours seemed to pass while that straggling, little fleet, hay and cotton bales stacked along its guards and about its boilers, dropped downstream, Porter in the *Benton* showing the way. It seemed that sleep had fallen on the five miles of battery-crested heights.

Then a spark of light glowed on the bluffs and rose in the air, trailing a faint, luminous line across the sky, and burst into a tiny shower of sparks. At the signal a jet of orange flame leaped from the bank far beyond, and before the report had travelled to the Captain's ear, came another flash, then a sheet of fire. Then along the banks above, below, and where the batteries shook the city itself, the Vicksburg cannoneers loosed their guns. Opposite the

city a house sprang into a blaze, and another, and then an old hulk near the Louisiana shore. Ribbons of rosy light were unrolled upon the stream. The gunboats and steamers, the black smoke pouring from their funnels, were uncovered. The batteries flamed from end to end. From the river came an answer now, the guns of the fleet. Flashes sprang from every gun they could bring to bear, and thick white smoke rolled out to be seamed with lightning-bolts, and the thunder was a continuous, mighty roar.

"The boats can never live under that," said an officer.

Boone shook his head. But the stocky figure before him was motionless except for a rocking of the head now and then or a shifting of the cigar in the lips which held it so tightly. Once he asked a question, "Where do you place the *Benton* now?" And some one answered, "Below the lowest battery, by her fire." The Captain nodded.

But suddenly a bright light sprang upon the river's surface and grew, and above it rose a great volume of smoke. The Captain spoke again, sharply, "What steamer is that on fire?"

"It ought to be the *Henry Clay* by her position."

Boone gripped the rail and declared it could not be. The *Henry Clay* must be much further downstream. Why, the gunboat *Tuscumbia* was further

down, as any one could see by the flash of her guns. And she had been the last vessel to start.

The Captain heard him, but did not answer. Presently, when the blazing hulk veered toward the Mississippi shore, and they could see that the firing from the gunboats was now all below her, he said over his shoulder to Boone, "They have had time enough to get off of her. I believe they are all on land by now."

While he spoke the flashes from the nearest batteries became less frequent. Steadily silence and darkness moved down-stream along the city's front, and soon only the lowest guns were firing. The blaze on the other side of the river died down, the flare on the sky paled. The thunder rolled sullenly but dully. There was a moment's hush, a single gush of fire and a dull report that echoed again and again. Then silence profound fell on the river. The seconds ticked off, not a man stirred on the boat where the Captain stood. Across the water came the faint peep of a frog. Some one spoke, "It is all over!"

The next morning they knew that the entire fleet had passed the batteries in safety except the *Henry Clay*. She had been disabled and set on fire. Her crew had taken to the boats. One yawl had been upset, and four men and an officer who were in it had not yet reported.

XXV

"Come and take me"

THE ball which Colonel Wilson of the Vicksburg garrison was to give had been talked of for a week. To-night it was to be, and Beatrix was going. In front of the glass of the old walnut bureau she sat, and behind her stood Lee combing and piling the rippling coils of ruddy hair. "Beatrix," she said, "you will meet some one to-night. I wonder what you will say to him."

"Now, I wonder? What will he say to me?"

"What he has been saying every time he sees you. What he said coming home from church last Sunday. It is no secret."

Beatrix tilted her chin and surveyed herself in the glass. She curved a rounded bare arm and twirled with a finger-tip a tiny curl on the nape of her neck. "Dear me," she said, "what a dreadfully long memory you have."

"Not as long as his. How long is his memory, Beatrix? When I was here before it was the same way." She stepped to one side and stood with head

cocked critically. "No," she said, "I am quite sure he will never let you leave him to-night until he has his answer. If you could see yourself — "

"Fiddlesticks!" exclaimed Beatrix. Then, wearily, "Oh, how tired I am of myself! As to him — " She paused. "Lee," she finished, "I do not think Major Carson will be at the party to-night. He went to Warrenton — right after our walk on Sunday last. I do not expect to see him again."

"Oh!" breathed Lee. "I did not know that. I am — very sorry."

Beatrix sat up straightly. "Why?" she challenged. "Why should you be sorry? Not for me, surely. And it was all his fault. He was so persistent, so blind. How I hate him!" She clinched a hand vindictively. But something which was neither in her voice nor words made Lee look at her closely, and ask, "Blind to what?"

"Why, blind to how I felt toward him, of course."

Lee came close and slid an arm around the bare shoulders. "No," she corrected, softly, "not to that. But blind to how you felt about — some one else. Isn't that what you mean?"

Then, when the colour should have flooded Beatrix's cheeks, instead what was there fled, and with very fair precision she asserted, "No, no, you are wrong — utterly wrong."

But Lee persisted. "Am I? You know I am not. Why, I have seen him. Don't you remember

that night our horses ran away on the Gravois road? Don't you remember the man who stopped them? You — "

"Well, what did I do? Tell me! I have forgotten. No, no, you need not tell me, either. I do not want to remember." A moment she halted, then, with chin very high, "He is a Yankee! A Yankee, you understand! Is not that enough?"

"Is it?" asked Lee. "Is it enough? You know that it isn't. Won't you trust me?" But Beatrix's eyes were set upon the glass and her lips were pressed together. Lee leaned forward until her face was close. "Beatrix," she whispered, "you went across the river one night not long ago. Why was that?"

Then the gaze of the wilful eye was shaken. "What do you mean? What night?"

"The night," said Lee, gently, "that you were visiting Mrs. Ives. Yes, I know about it. Her servants told old Cæsar, and I overheard him talking next day. Did you go to that Union party, Beatrix, because you had forgotten?" There was a little silence, and she urged, "Dear, tell me all about it, won't you? I want to help you. And I can understand."

But when Beatrix spoke she was smiling, "Yes, I went there," she said, lightly. "I had the invitation from Mr. Ives, and I reckoned I'd have a right good time. And, perhaps, I had. There was a man

there who is an old friend of mine, and — yours. We talked about Gravois. He asked about you."

"David!" Did Lee's lips fashion the name? The comb slipped from her fingers and slid to the floor. She stooped and picked it up, then walked across the room and laid it on a table. There she straightened a photograph, a mirror, and a tray, and all the while she said nothing. But when she turned it was to come to where Beatrix sat, and say, quietly, "I was wrong to ask so much. Forgive me."

Midnight struck and to Lee it had never seemed so still, though in the magnolia-trees close to the window a legion of insects shrilled incessantly. Twice she heard 'Lias pass the house, humming a plantation song. A faint sound of contention came from the quarters. Then all was quiet, and she lay, staring at the ceiling with wide open eyes. At the ball by now she imagined that they must be having supper. Beatrix would not return for two hours. She tried to drive away the thoughts which would not let her sleep, and she was slipping into slumber when the air quivered with a rumbling echo, and she started up in bed. In a moment it rolled again, and she leaned forward, listening. There had been some firing for several nights; but, now, the thunder of continuous cannonading grew heavier, and she got up quickly and slipped on a gown. Out on the

veranda she stepped, and the rattling explosions made her shrink.

Some one ran around the corner of the house, and 'Lias's voice called. The Union forces were firing on the river-front of the city. But there was no danger. Miss Celia came hurrying out. She heard the explanation. She snapped a finger. "It will soon be over," she declared. "The Yankees will be driven back into their swamps!"

But the firing continued and every minute it grew heavier. From the end of the veranda through the vines they could see a flare in the sky over the river, and into this field of light from the darkness beyond soared curving lines of brighter fire, meteors which dropped fast and burst, some of them in mid-air, with sharp detonations. The servants crowded to the porch below, and Miss Celia went down to reassure them. Her contempt for anything which the Yankees might do was more effective than all the words of comfort she could have spoken. She returned to the porch, announcing that, for her part, she would go back to bed. But she lingered, none the less; and by and by the firing, which had travelled to the south, slackened, and between two reports they heard the sound of a carriage driven fast toward the house.

Lee was sure that a sigh of relief came from Miss Celia as Beatrix answered the call. Yes, she called

back, she was all right. Then she came up on the veranda.

Miss Celia on the instant was herself again. "Well, I trust the Yankees will remember this night's lesson!"

Beatrix flung the wrap from her shoulders. "The Yankee fleet," she answered, "has passed our forts and gone down river. All but one boat. We set that on fire. I hear we captured two men. Think of it! *Two!*"

Her aunt snorted. "It is so," Beatrix affirmed. "Oh! it was shameful! Some of our cannons, they say, were useless. The whole city is in the streets."

"For what?" demanded Miss Celia. "I should like to know for what! Where have *you* been? In the street, too?"

Beatrix burst into a laugh. "Exactly, I was driven into the street. I could not help myself. I was almost crushed. When the first shell dropped near by everybody rushed out of the room. Some fool said we were not safe indoors, and all the women ran pell-mell to the pavement. The men could not stop them. I was dragged along by a girl who was frightened half to death. I never saw such a ridiculous sight. Another shell came over, and somebody shrieked, 'Lie down! Lie down, quick!' That was enough. Every woman dropped right down in the dust. Oh!" with another burst of vexed laughter, "it was the most absurd proceeding ever was.

At last I found a man who had sense enough left to escort me back to Colonel Wilson's, and there I had a time finding Cæsar. He was hidden in a cellar with most of the other servants. When I did find him I could hardly persuade him to bring round the carriage. We came home most of the way on two wheels."

Miss Celia rose in her wrath. "The Yankees passed our forts!" she exclaimed. "I do not believe they did. I shall order the carriage to-morrow morning and learn the truth for myself. The Yankees! Stuff and nonsense!" With that she swept from the veranda.

But the next day she returned from her drive too indignant to communicate her news. Philip came hurrying to the house late in the afternoon. "Yes," he said, "all the Yankee gunboats and all of the transports with them, except one, passed down the river safely." The steamer which had been disabled had burned to her guards. Her crew got away in small boats. He believed that one of these boats had been upset. Two men had been taken from the river. That was all. The Union fleet, it was thought, would attack below the city, and try to land the troops which were marching down along the opposite bank. He was ordered to Warrenton.

Miss Celia retired into the fortifications of silence that evening, and refused to be drawn out by Philip's account of what was being done to prepare

against an attack. Beatrix asked many questions, and Lee tried to do her part. But it became harder for her to speak as the meal drew to a close, and she knew that Philip would soon be leaving, for how long he could not tell.

There was to be fighting, of course. That he knew. So, when he rose and kissed his aunt and Beatrix, and came around the table to where she sat, she did not move. She gave him her hand, and "Good-bye," she said, faintly, then drew her fingers away.

He stooped and picked up something from the floor, and for a moment stood beside her. She knew he was hoping she would go to the door with him. But she could not do that; and when he understood that she was not going, and saw his aunt about to rise, he said, quickly, "No, no one must come out. It would be bad luck. Good-bye again," and walked to the doorway. There he paused, and only Lee saw him raise something to his lips. It was her handkerchief, and above it his eyes rested on hers, — so gaily, yet so tenderly. Then he was gone.

April went by and the May days came, and Vicksburg, girdled with hills, became a city of caves. From below had marched a great army, and slowly it wound its way north and about the city till it held it tightly in its immense folds. Jackson, the place from which help was to come, was captured by

a move which set the whole military world agog. Johnston, the expected deliverer, was driven back. Then Vicksburg knew it must fight its own battle, and with grim resolution settled in its semicircle of entrenchments. Within the city the people turned themselves into moles. Day and night the digging went on, and burrows soon were at every corner and by the sides of houses, and in the face of every hilly street. In these was the only safety from the whirring shells and blasts of grape which sped from the hills on the south and the east and the north and again from the river itself. On the slope of the city eastward where the few houses were half-buried in the thick foliage of trees, and pink myrtles and magnolias scented the air, and the passion-vine clustered over porches and roses bloomed, — there the ravines and the nearer hills were a shield at first, and those who lived there knew only by the riven tree-trunks and the torn earth in some open spot how near was death to their doorsteps. Beatrix and Lee and Miss Celia could hear the sigh and whistle of what the Union guns launched from their throats a mile away, yet in the shadow of the ridge which rose steeply behind them remained secure.

But Beatrix would not be penned in. Long after Miss Celia's scorn of Yankee achievements broke down under the strain of sleepless nights and scenes of fright and death and she weakly retired to her room with her prayer-book, Beatrix dared to make

the journey to the city. She had volunteered for service in the hospitals. Each day these became more crowded, though the mounting heat and disease and poor food emptied scores of beds in a night; and the work kept her always busy. But what a nurse she was! No hand more gentle or step more light than hers, and she smoothed many a pillow and raised many a head with a tenderness which brought a smile to unshaven lips. Of words, though, it is to be feared, she had few which were heard from other nurses. And once the old surgeon beckoned to her. His face was grave, though something twitched his lips. And, "Miss Pemberton," he said, "if I might suggest. Those boys have done their fighting for the present. Wait till we get them out of bed. Then you can start them at it again, and no one could make them do more then, I know."

Beatrix flushed. Perhaps she remembered the advice. At least, the next day, one broad-shouldered, wasted young fellow with bandaged shoulder raised himself on his good arm to call to the surgeon, "Hey, there, doctor, we ain't done been whipped again, have we?" and to the surgeon's surprised "no," explained, "I done reckon sho' we had, when thet fightin' nurse a mine come 'long an' was so quiet. She ain't got no call t' be that quiet, doctor. It makes th' boys feel pow'rful down-hearted." Beatrix! Beatrix! How often did you and your sisters of the South put fire into the breasts of those

gallant, weary, ragged fellows who fought under your flag.

But the sick and wounded who were brought in from the lines were not the only ones who needed a nurse, and the care of one of these fell on Lee. A great heat laid hold of the city as June came in, and Miss Celia succumbed to it, and Lee chose to stay by her. So, day after day she spent in the room with darkened windows, and sometimes read and sometimes talked to the old lady, now become querulous and impatient, until she fell asleep. While her patient slept she would steal out, and on the veranda sit and watch the hills to the south and north, which ever breathed fire and smoke. More than once with Beatrix she had travelled over the Jackson road to the city, and up the little hill between the rows of oaks to the court-house, and climbed its narrow stairway to the railed balcony which ran around the cupola beneath the bell-tower. It was from there she had first seen the smoke of the Union fleet, lying heavily upon the lowlands. And in these later days over the hills and across the river an encampment was spread out, the tents dotting every piece of dry ground among the plantations, while along the river were strung the steamers and the squat, ugly hulks of the gunboats. But down the river, to where it made its abrupt sweep northward again, around the tongue of land opposite the city that great host of men in blue soon pushed

its way; and mounted guns on the Louisiana shore; and even the heights of Sky Parlour Hill, up whose steep steps climbed a swarm of sightseers on every clear day, became a danger spot. After that, when she was able to evade the vigilance of 'Lias, Lee ventured beyond the shelter of the hills only to walk along the lane which wound in the hollows between near-by ridges.

But there were other dangers, and the hills gave no comfort from these. Hunger! It was spoken of in April as a far-away thing, an incident of celebrated sieges. In May it was something to be considered. In June Vicksburg knew what it meant. Within the compass of his army, stretched from river-bank to river-bank, the Captain held the city, and no living thing might pass into it or out of it, either on the earth or on the water, except by his consent. No, that is not so; a few men did float on logs along the banks and so gain the city; but besides these none, and they carried no food, only percussion-caps hidden in their clothes, and one of them a message from General Johnston hovering futilely in the north. Vicksburg saw no other new face from the day the Captain sat down about it and said it should be his.

But how long was it to be until he should redeem his word? June waxed, and the red sun beat down hotly and dried the great floods, and disease stalked by night and day. Yet Vicksburg held its own.

The blue lines which had sunk into the hills and ravines moved slowly toward the city. Soon they were close to the warren where the city's defenders lay on their bellies and shot the caps from every head which showed above ground. So close that a hand might toss a bit of tobacco or a spill of coffee across the space between. Then would they talk to each other and exchange the news. To the man in blue the Vicksburg man would call, "Hey, there! What do you uns reckon y'r doing?"

"Teachin' you fellows how t' keep boardin'-house for yourselves."

"Thet so? Well, ain't seen Vicksburg gettin' tired of th' job yet."

"What's th' hurry? Fourth a July is time enough."

"Fourth a July'll be hot as hell if you-uns try for that."

It was hot enough already. What the sun did not do the big guns and the small made shift to accomplish. But it was never so hot that one man of the vast army in those hills could not go into the trenches and straighten the coils. He walked with little care for his safety and no more care for how he looked. The red mud of the ditches was smeared to his boot-tops, dust was in every crease of his wrinkled clothes, dust in the hollows of his face. But the eyes beneath the low-pulled hat-brim never missed fire. It was said in the earliest of those days

that a tooth-brush and a pipe were all his baggage. Often he was among the men and gone before they knew that he had come. But when he was needed he remained. Remained, though the chances were ten to one against his ever leaving if he waited. Where they were clearing the ground and piling earth for a new battery one day the Confederate sharpshooters made the air hum, and twice the workers broke and ran for cover. From a little clump of trees just then stepped the Captain, chewing the fag end of a long cigar, and walked to a pile of split logs. There he drew out his knife and picked up a bit of wood. The noonday sun blazed on him, bullets struck slivers from the logs and channelled the ground at his feet. But on the wood in his hand he seemed intent, and he never raised his eyes. "Damned if I can lie back while he whittles that stick out there!" said one old sergeant. "It ain't in human natur'." So out into the open the fugitives came, and began to serve the guns again.

After a minute more the Captain closed his knife and stood up. "This isn't the only hot place, men," he remarked. Then he walked away.

Hotter it was and in more places than one, as June drew to a close. An afternoon came when the sun was a brazen ball and the red earth a furnace sending up its own stifling heat, — the 25th of June. On that morning Philip had gone to his post near the great fortification which towered above the

Jackson road; and at the dinner-table Beatrix was speaking of the report that the place was to be assaulted, when a dull explosion, deeper, more ominous than any which they had heard, shook the house and started them from their seats. They ran out on the porch. To the southeast, not far away, above the hills piled a great rounded cloud of white smoke. Rising through this a denser fountain of dust which spread a pall over the sky there. That was all, and the fierce roar of the guns which followed drowned out every other sound. At nightfall they heard that a vast mine had been sprung beneath the fortification. In the crater which it left scores were blown apart by hand grenades, crushed by rocks, and riddled by bullets before Vicksburg's defenders made good their title to the place.

Beatrix was gone to the hospital at five o'clock, and when she did not return they remembered the toll which the crater had taken, and knew why. Philip rode up in the early morning, so powder-stained and haggard that Lee scarce recognised him. He was away again in an hour. He was ordered to the water-front, where they were building many boats. It might be that an attempt would be made to escape by the river. He expected to be away for several days at least.

As he stood on the steps of the porch while old Cæsar was bringing his horse, Lee's fingers closed on his and clung to them. In his face was some-

thing she had never seen there before. Not all the bravery of his smile nor his sparkling eyes deceived her. He said, "We will beat them off yet," and she knew in an instant that he knew that this was not to be. Yet the old spirit spoke, the spirit of the South, gallant and challenging in its most desperate hour.

"Philip," she said, "Vicksburg is not all. When you come back, if it is for me, I will — I will be here."

A minute later he was riding away along the sunken road. As he mounted a little rise he turned in the saddle, looking back, and swung his cap. The kiss which he had pressed upon her palm seemed to linger there, and she was sure she could never forget the joy which had kindled his eyes.

At ten o'clock of that morning Beatrix's old friend, the surgeon, came to her with a request. An adjoining house had been made into a temporary receiving-ward for the hospital. There had been brought, the night before, a score of new patients. The surgeon twisted his grizzled moustache. "One of them is a Yankee."

"I am not nursing Yankees," she answered.

"That is so," said the surgeon, reflectively. "So of course he must — die. No one wants to take care of a Yankee, and he has been in prison a long time."

"In prison?"

"He was in prison until to-day, because he would not give his parole. We fished him out of the river the first night the batteries were run. He was wounded. He's pretty nearly done for now. But he's — a Yankee."

"Point him out to me," she said, suddenly. "I will do what I can for him." But she was angry with herself. Why should she leave her people to make it easier for one of those who had filled the beds and even the floors around her with the hollow-eyed, starved, and broken fellows who lay so patiently in their misery?

The old surgeon made no reply. He piloted her to the door, and told the orderly there to do what she requested, then stalked away, a smile on his thin lips. He was wondering what lesson this militant nurse of his would preach to her crippled foe.

Beatrix began her ministrations at the doorway, and as cot and pallet were passed by, and the gray or butternut clothes of the sufferers told her on which side they had fought, she almost forgot the Yankee who somewhere here waited for her. Without warning she was looking down upon him.

His head was turned to one side, and his eyes were closed. The cheek-bones stood out in grim prominence and the curling hair was long and matted. A thin hand played with the edge of the sheet, which was drawn up so that the lower part of his face was hid. But Beatrix knew him on the

instant. She bent and laid a hand on his wrist. The pulse throbbed under her fingers. Then he opened his eyes. But the stare was vacant, and when she spoke to him his eyelids stirred only to drop quickly. She found the orderly and questioned him. But he knew nothing. Then she stood by the door, looking along the street with the shattered houses at its far end and the dirty yellow mounds up and down its length with a tattered square of cloth or a blanket fastened over the mouth of many of the caves. A hundred feet away on the other side of a little hill there was a crash, a ripping explosion, and a great puff of dust, and she knew that another shell had found its way into the town. Two men toiled up the steep rise, a stained strip of canvas slung on two poles between them, a man's arm swinging over the edge. A Yankee shell! And this the work of Yankees! Resentment flashed into her eyes. "I would not moisten his lips!" she declared between her teeth, and turned to go back into the house. Then came a recollection which made her pale cheeks burn, and she stepped into the street, and sought the surgeon.

That gentleman twisted his moustache again, and was in a quandary. Her request was without precedent. If he had foreseen anything of this kind — The Yankee was a military prisoner; he had refused parole. That he was wounded badly — well, there

were hundreds in the same state, and Confederate soldiers at that.

But Beatrix had her way; it was seldom she had not, and her name and services were worth something then and there. Only she must pledge the custody and good behaviour of her prisoner. "*Prisoner?*" A sad smile touched her lips. "You have not looked at him closely," she said. "But I will promise what is required."

It was in one of those inexplicable brief pauses in the firing when the Union guns seemed to be taking a rest, that Beatrix late in the afternoon of two days later stepped softly along the darkened hall of her home. There was a room on the western side of the building with a window opening on the veranda. There she had had David brought. On the first day, it seemed, only to have him die; but, on the next, as she knew when she laid a hand on his forehead, to take a new hold on life. She had left him this morning still unconscious of where he was or with whom. Now she stopped at the doorway and looked in to see him with face upturned, sleeping.

But it was not this which made her stand where she was. A figure kneeled by the side of the couch, and over him leaned a face whose lips — in the dim light she could not be sure — but they seemed to be moving; and surely she caught the echo of a name faintly spoken, "David! David!" Then a

slim hand hovered above the speaker's head, and for an instant touched the tangled hair on the pillow, and a curious, little, broken sound came to her ears. The figure rose; Beatrix turned and sped away.

Wednesday morning — the Wednesday of July 1st — and the crests about Vicksburg were ringed with a fire such as in its worst days Vicksburg had not known before. Under this fiery breath and the pitiless heat of the sun it seemed as if the city must be consumed utterly, and no life or habitation be left. Every avenue, from the fortifications in the rear to the heights where the court-house still reared its cupola above the river, was a pathway of death, except those winding ditches which cut through the hills. And along these the dead were carried.

Vicksburg was living on the meat of its mules and on a dole of ground peas. But still its guns spoke back, slowly and sullenly. A few days before, a Confederate woman had written to her husband outside the city, "We put our trust in Heaven and Joe Johnston." That letter was placed in the Captain's hands. Reading it a smile was on his lips. "Sherman," he said, "they seem to put a great deal of trust in Heaven and Johnston. We'll lick Johnston as soon as we've finished this Vicksburg job."

"When will that be?" asked Sherman, with grim humour.

"I can't tell exactly," the Captain answered.

"But I shall stay here to do it if it takes twenty years."

So on this July morning, in the house under the first hills back of the fortifications, they heard the whimpering of shrapnel balls and the scream of the shell hurrying overhead, and knew that it would not be twenty years nor yet twenty days until the tale of Vicksburg was told. In that vale with its trees clustered close to the hillside and the ravine below where the headquarters' horses grazed amid a shower of bullets dropping from the sky, only this house and one other near by, where temporary field headquarters had been established, were safe from the withering storm of lead and iron which poured from four sides upon the city on the heights.

David, propped up on pillows, was writing a letter. It was against orders. Beatrix was doctor, and she had forbidden it. But there are some things a wise physician yields, and Beatrix had yielded this. The day before when he spoke of Boone she had promised that word should be got to him soon. 'Lias knew a way. He had already carried one message through.

The intelligence was all that was needed to determine David to write. He argued that Boone would lose no chance to write him under similar circumstances. "Now would he?" He appealed to Beatrix (they were alone at the time).

"I am no judge," she said.

"Because you are prejudiced."

"Yes, I reckon that is so." Her hand smoothed a fold in her gown, but he could make nothing of her face.

"So I am going to write," he announced, and began his task. But even the one side of a sheet of note-paper, which his uncertain hand filled with sprawling letters, was a task which overtaxed him. All at once he sank back on the pillow, his arms falling weakly. "I didn't know what a cripple I was," he said, apologetically. "Beatrix, be good to me. Finish my letter. There are only a few lines more."

Apparently she did not hear him. She was standing by the window overlooking the path to the ravine. He asked her again, and she came toward the bedside. "Oh, yes, I will finish it. But you do not deserve it. What shall I say?"

He began to dictate. It was easy enough now, and messages crowded to his lips. But he spoke slowly, and over the edge of the bed coverings he saw her, the paper spread on a book, her head bent over it. The tip of the pen told him that she was writing rapidly. So when he said, "That is enough, thank you," and still her face remained bent, he remarked, "Was I saying all that? I must have spoken too fast."

Her head straightened quickly. She raised the letter and scanned it.

He held out his hand. "No," she said, hurriedly, "you have done too much already. I will read it to you." She read it carefully, and folded it and put it in the envelope. While she sealed it, she remarked, "'Lias must start with it at once. I signed it for you." She rose.

"Oh, — did you?" said David, and was a little surprised. "I had something to put into a postscript," he added.

She was at the door, when she turned, and her eyes were defiant. "There *is* a postscript," she said. "It is about Vicksburg. I have told him what she says — *'If you want me come and take me!'*"

XXVI

Lee

LATE in the afternoon of the next day David awakened, and for a few minutes lay in the old chintz-covered chair by the window winking at the ceiling and knowing that he was much stronger. A thin breeze sifted through the lowered blinds, and it was almost free of the acrid taint of burnt powder which had hung in the air for so long. The firing from the hills had dwindled. Then Beatrix entered, tiptoeing across the room, and he turned his head and saw on the little round-top marble table by his bed a nosegay. He reached over, his eyes brightened. These were the first flowers he had seen for many weeks. Sniffing their fragrance, he thanked her for them.

She shook her head and, with a mysterious smile, replied, "From — a friend." She crossed to the further window and raised the blind. The sun had fallen below the nearest ridge and a big sweet-gum stirred its dusty leaves close by. Long shadows were creeping down the slope of the ravine's water-

cut banks of clay, and there a dozen horses cropped the foliage of the bushes. Further on guns were stacked, and a long line of men was stretched in the shade, many of them asleep, a few squatted around little piles of sticks from which twisted lazy spirals of smoke. Beatrix drew in a long breath of the air, and asked, "Do you feel that breeze? It has been so hot to-day that I reckon the sun just had to give it up for awhile."

There was no response from the chair, and she looked over and saw that his eyes were on the flowers which he was turning in his hands. A minute or more slipped by. She left the window and mechanically straightened the chair and rearranged some books on the bureau. All the while she stole glances at him. But he did not raise his eyes, and his silence disturbed her. She guessed that he was wondering why Lee had not come with her flowers. Twice he had asked about her, once that morning; and it had not been easy to answer him. He had made no remark when he heard that she was busy nursing Miss Celia. But Beatrix knew that the reason for Lee's absence lay not with Miss Celia. An hour before she had seen her standing by the door, the flowers in her hand, listening, until, sure that he was asleep, she stole in, and soon came out very softly. A little later, coming upon her unexpectedly, Beatrix saw that her eyes were wet, and the fingers which she closed so quickly did not

quite conceal a single flower like those she had left in his room.

But this David could not know, and Beatrix did not tell him. If he had known it, she doubted that it would have helped him. But one thing she could tell him, and this, it was but fair to Lee and to him that he should know. With those flowers in his hands he would surely understand what was meant. So, standing by the window, she spoke about the soldiers in the ravine. "They came in last night, and looked so worn out. Think of it! On half-rations, peas and mule meat at that, they say. And hard duty, day and night almost, for over five weeks! One of their officers told me last night that they expect to go upon the redoubt on the Jackson road to-day."

"Yes," he answered, listlessly. Then, recollection stirred by the mention of that highway against which his own soldiers were massed, he asked, quickly, "'Lias? Has he come back?"

"Not yet."

"But he was to be in this morning. He hasn't been stopped?"

"Oh, he will come soon," she said, soothingly.

"You promise to let me see him as soon as he comes?"

"Of course. But I was going to tell you — what was it? Oh, yes, the officer who came to the house last night brought a message — from Philip. He

said we might expect to see Philip this evening — here."

She was purposely looking out the window. She hoped that he would say something which would make it easier for her to continue. But only a faint rustle from the big chair told her that he had heard and perhaps understood. The silence drove her to go on, "He is coming for dinner. Philip, I mean. Dinner!" with comic dismay. "David, let me give you the bill of fare. No, I won't. It is better anyhow than what they get where he has been."

From the big chair still no response and once more the silence became an embarrassment. "And that reminds me," she said, trying valiantly to be cheerful, "Miss Celia brightened this morning and sat up for the first time. She declared she felt right hungry, and believed that she would like to have some — what do you suppose?"

Still again she waited in vain. Then she saw that he was not looking at her at all. He was leaning back against the pillow, the flowers loose in his extended hands, his head turned away. It was on her tongue to bid him take courage. But something forbade it, and she wondered could she go to Lee and tell her.

And David? He was fighting a harder battle than any he had fought before — harder than any in those days of troubled indecision when he walked the floor of his room at college and wrestled with

the problem Mr. Lincoln set for him. This fight he had thought won. First when six months ago he rode out of Holly Springs, remembering that he had failed her, and that the man who had not failed her had passed through there with her but a few hours before. Again, when Beatrix had left him on the Union boat at Milliken's Bend, and he had reasoned out what she had told him, and in the end shaken his head. Still again, he thought he had settled with himself when he waked in the house where he now lay, and a dream returned to him, — a dream of a face bent over his, and a voice whispering his name. And he put the dream from him, telling himself that it could never be more than a dream. But now? Now came these flowers, and, when he held them against his face, there was a message in their fragrance which made his heart leap. But in another moment he had decided that the message was the keepsake of a memory only. He was more sure of this when he heard that Philip was coming. "Farewell," the flowers whispered. Or, if they did not, they asked him to remember the old days always. So, when Beatrix spoke again, he had the message next his heart and answered quietly, and never thought to give a reason for it, "Beatrix, ask Lee if she will come and see me for a little while. I am going back to the hospital to-day."

"Going back to the hospital? You? To-day?

Why — you can't." You had guessed at a good deal, Beatrix; you had never thought of this.

"But I am," he returned. "As soon as 'Lias comes. I count on you to help me."

"Help you do that? It would kill you! I will not help you — not one inch."

"Then I must try to get there without your help." He smiled. "For I am going to-day." He lifted himself on his elbow, and his thin face was pale and stubborn. Lee would have known what that closed jaw meant. Beatrix understood enough to make her say, quickly, "Well, I will tell Lee. But that is all."

She left him lying with the flowers in his hand, staring at the opposite wall, and walked slowly down the stair. While she stood in the hallway, pondering how much she could tell, Lee came in from the porch. Then she gave her the message and turned away quickly and climbed to her own room and locked the door and flung herself on the bed. All the world seemed gone wrong. The throbbing thunder of the guns had begun again. She heard them dully, and into her mind came recollections of what she had written into David's letter to Boone. A challenge? Yes, it was that and nothing else, she told herself. And a challenge, — a boast of the South, he had taken it to be, of course; and by now had forgotten it most likely. What else might she expect? Suddenly she buried her face in the pil-

lows and tried to muffle her ears to the sound which had grown hateful to her with a hatefulness distinct from its message of command and death.

At the door of David's room Lee was knocking. He called to her to come in. He was sitting up straightly, and the pillows were piled at one side. "I'm mighty glad you were able to come so soon," he exclaimed. "Won't you sit here near me, where we can talk?" He was smiling at her in the old friendly way, and his voice was clear and cheerful if it was not very strong. It carried her back to Gravois days, and brought a sense of peace with it. "Why, David, you are like yourself again," she said, as she settled herself in the chair by him. "Now we have only to get some colour into your cheeks."

"That will come as soon as I get out in the air. And I have been taken such good care of here that I have no excuse to stay any longer."

"I didn't know you needed an excuse," she said, reproachfully. "I am sure Beatrix is glad to have you. And I — well, I reckon, we're too old friends to talk about excuses. Aren't we? Besides, now that Miss Celia is better, I intend to help take care of you. You see she has been so nervous and miserable till now that — "

"Yes, I know," he put in, quickly. "You've had your hands full. I didn't expect you to come. And

I heard from you each day. But now I have decided that I should report for — duty."

"I don't think I understand."

"Go back, I mean — where I came from last. Time's up, and — they want me."

Lee's heart was tugging at her lips. She leaned forward, her hands together in her lap, with puzzled brows. "But you are in Vicksburg. Besides, you are not strong enough."

"Not strong enough?" he laughed. "Look at this!" He leaned sideways and picked up a pillow, flourishing it above his head. "How's that?" Then the pillow dropped, and his arm fell loosely. The little spots of colour in his cheeks went out, and he swayed, catching at the cover over his knees. She had sprung to her feet and was beside him. But as she reached out a hand, he recovered himself. "I am all right now," he declared. "I am sorry I frightened you. If I had a glass of water — "

Did he lean away from her? Even in her fright she was conscious that he had. For a moment her arm remained outstretched, an open hand extended to him. Then it dropped, and she turned and ran to the table in a corner where a pitcher stood. She tilted it. It was empty. "Never mind," he called. "I'll be all right in a minute."

"No, no," she said. "I will get some water from the cistern. It won't take a minute."

She sped to the door, and he heard her run down

the stairs. A moment passed and he heard another step on the stairs. Some one came up and along the hallway. Beatrix, he thought, and feared she would come in. But the steps went by and toward the door which gave on the veranda outside his window. While he was yet wondering who it was, Lee came into the room again.

She poured a glass of the water and came over with it. He was lying back against the pillows, and reached out for it. But this time she was determined. She put the water down on the table and slid an arm beneath his shoulders and raised him. David, you did your best, but you were very weak for all your boast. And she knew it. Her arm curved about you gently and yet so firmly that you had no chance to resist. And you could not warn her. So she raised you, raised you and drew you toward her. Then, all at once, your head in the hollow of her arm, you were looking your danger in the face, and all else was forgotten. All but the eyes whose depths of tenderness you had never known before, and the lips a little parted which did not move, yet whispered to you the one word you cared to hear. She pressed you closer, and a lock of hair brushed your temple. Then your heart spoke. "Lee," you said. "Lee," and "Lee," again. And in that instant all was changed. The light in her eyes was gone, a frightened quiver at her lips, and the arm slipped from beneath you. "Oh! oh!" she cried.

But David lifted himself and stretched out an arm.

"Don't! David, don't," she begged. "You don't understand."

"I do," he cried. "I understand. But I love you."

"No, no, you are wrong. And it was my fault. I tell you it was a mistake." She did not look at him, and repeated, "It was a mistake."

"It was not a mistake," he answered. "If it was —" He halted there, and in a moment spoke again, quietly. "Lee, we have known each other a long, long time. We were always good comrades, and when we were together back home we trusted each other always. Isn't that so, dear?"

A little broken "yes" came to his ear.

"Then why can't we trust each other now? It is not so different. I am David, just the same as I used to be, and you are Lee. Only now I understand. I know why it was that you were always more to me than anyone else, why I was always lonely without you. And, dear, if I was a long time understanding this, you must forgive me because we will go over all those years again together."

"But we can't, we can't! Oh, David! don't you see we can't? It is too late."

"It is not too late. It would only be too late if you did not love me. But you do. I know it.

You have told me so. Trust me. Look at me, dear, and tell me so again."

How long it was before she looked at him, her eyes entreating him to believe her and a tremble at her mouth! "David, David, dear, you don't understand even yet. I can't say what you want. I have no right to say that to you — now." Then she laid her hand in his, and his fingers closed on it. But his face was turned away.

The firing from the hills had died in a rumble in the south and the voice of a man shouting came from the garden. Another voice replied from the veranda just outside the window, and she started away with a whispered cry. "Philip! He was there on the veranda."

David did not answer, and while they waited they heard him come into the hallway and go downstairs. Then a strange voice speaking to him. "I have my orders, Colonel. They are from headquarters. Communicating with the Yankees. The man was seen going through the lines this morning. It is the second time — a tall man with sandy hair. He was recognised."

"What of it? It has nothing to do with this house."

"But he is known to have come from here."

"Well, catch him. Then come back. But don't come until you do. I am no detective. Give that message to your officer with my compliments."

A moment's pause, then the other man again, "Sorry, Colonel, but my orders are to bring back that Yankee officer you're nursing. I have a detail here."

"What Yankee officer?" Philip burst out. "Are you harking back to that nonsense? What do you take this house for? Do you know my name? If you don't, report it at headquarters before you go further."

"I know all that, sir. And so does headquarters. A Yankee officer, I was told."

"Look here!" Philip was speaking evenly but stiffly. "I suppose my word will be accepted. You'll find it is where you came from."

"Of course, if you say —"

"I do. I say that I have seen no Yankee officer in this house. And as I live here I ought to know. Is that sufficient?"

Another pause, then, "Yes, Colonel, I reckon it is. But it's queer. Well — good evening, sir." There was a quick step across the porch below, and they heard Philip coming slowly up-stairs. At their door he paused, then went on. The minutes passed, and again they heard his steps in the hallway and on the stairs, going down. The cannonading swept up from the south once more, gathering volume as it moved. For an instant Lee's hand pressed David's. Then she was gone.

Back in her room, she closed the door behind her,

and with her foot on the sill, something white pinned to the cushion on the bureau caught her eye. It was a scrap of paper, with a corner turned down, and her name written across it. Before she opened it she knew what it was to tell her, even as she knew from whom it came. The pin which held it was a five-pointed star of gold with a row of tiny pearls in each point, a treasure of her girlhood days. She had always worn it, worn it until it had become, as he had told her when he begged it from her, "just the nearest thing to being a little bit of yourself, sweetheart. And so I reckon I'm mighty *au*-dacious asking you for it as a keepsake." But she had given it to him, — her only gift. And he had worn it, as she once discovered, suspended from a ribbon round his neck. "So, you see, it is almost as close to you now, sweetheart, as it was before," he explained. "'Deed, that's what my heart tells me, anyhow."

Now it lay in her hand. He had given it back to her unasked. With it he had left — ? She unfolded the note and read the dozen words it held. Then she raised the note and pressed her lips to it. "Good-bye! Good-bye!" she whispered.

Twilight was fading softly. Shadows had enfolded the ravine and filled its far end with purple. Night was stealing into the room. David by the window lay back in the chair, his hands dropped in

his lap, gazing away toward the north, and saw neither the sweet-gum stirring in the breeze close by, nor yet the stretch of road which showed a yellow blur through the magnolias beyond. He only knew that he was not alone when a voice spoke close behind him. "David." No more, and it was faintly spoken, yet in the word was offered to him something very pitiful and yet so sweet. He reached out a hand, and spoke her name. In the dark her fingers touched his own, then slipped into his clasp, and he knew that she had brought her loneliness and trouble to him. He drew her to him and spoke her name, "Lee, Lee," holding her hand against his cheek so that he felt each beat in the slender wrist. She leaned against the back of the chair, a hand was laid upon his head and rested there. After a little while, he said, "I don't think that I ever knew Philip — before. And I would like to tell him something when he comes back."

"Hush," she said, softly. "He will not come back — now."

"Not come?" he began, wonderingly. Then it was told him what she meant, and his fingers tightened their hold.

"No," she whispered. "He has said — his goodbye." She slipped down beside him and her head was laid against his arm. He drew her hand to his lips. The darkness deepened, not far away a

spark glowed against the wall of the ravine and another near the roadside. A tongue of flame licked the blackness, and soon men began to move in and out of the widening circles of light. But David saw none of this. He was looking down on the head against his arm, and he was conscious only that she was beside him. She had come to him, she was never to leave him.

But Lee? Even in those silent moments when her heart spoke to his and was answered, she remembered that somewhere in that night was riding a trim, lithe figure in Confederate gray. A boyish, eager face was before her, and a voice, the voice which always lingered on her name, echoed faintly. For he had loved her truly and tried gallantly to win her. And he had lost, lost bravely, as his South was losing, and gone away, leaving only those few broken words which she could never forget.

So when she raised her head and David saw her eyes shining through the tears, she answered his unspoken question. "Yes, it is Philip, dear. I was thinking of him. I wish he knew that I would always remember him."

After that the minutes slipped by, and old Cæsar knocked once hesitatingly, and went away. Beatrix, coming from Lee's empty room to this same door, looked in and, more clear of vision, understood, and stole down the hall unnoticed. A star

shone out above the cropped top of the big gum-tree, and another came to keep it company. Perhaps the two by the window saw them, and spoke of something that awaited them, far beyond to the north.

XXVII

The Captain's Way

FROM the porch Beatrix saw two men in uniform ride along the Jackson road toward the fortifications. While they rounded the shoulder of the ridge she stood, her hands clenched, then turned into the house and climbed the stairs. Before the door of Miss Celia's room she debated before she stepped inside and closed the door. The blinds were lowered. Between the slats sifted little dusty bands of sunlight which slanted across the figure in the high-backed rocking-chair and touched the hands folded upon an open prayer-book. Beatrix just over the threshold hesitated again, her heart failing her.

Miss Celia opened her eyes. "Yes?" she said, inquiringly.

"Oh, it's nothing." Beatrix sought for the knob of the door behind her. "You were resting."

The eyes fixed upon her face were very bright and searching now. "I *have* been asleep. That makes no difference. What is it?" A hand on

either arm of the chair, Miss Celia raised herself and sat stiffly alert. Suddenly she exclaimed, "They are not firing. This morning you told me —"

Beatrix had found the door-knob, but she no longer meditated retreat. Only it was even harder to tell what she had to tell than it had been to acknowledge the truth to herself. "Yes," she answered, "they are not firing. And what I told you this morning was what I — hoped. I was wrong. They are not fighting because there is a white flag over the Jackson road fort."

"A white flag!" Miss Celia's mouth framed the words. But no sound issued forth. She swayed a little forward, then was rigid once more, looking straight ahead of her and seeming to see far away. So almost a minute of silence. Then, still clutching the arms of the chair, she demanded, "Who has dared? Who has dared to raise a white flag? You are wrong, Beatrix. You must be wrong."

But Beatrix's face told her no, and, when she sat so still, Beatrix spoke, "No, aunty, it is no mistake. I did not tell you about it till I had to. But I saw General Pemberton ride past the house. A few minutes ago. And, I heard, he was to confer with — the Yankees."

Miss Celia cried out, "Then they haven't yet surrendered the city?" A spark glowed in her eyes. "And they never will! Help me dress. There are men left, thank God! They must stop this coward-

ice. I will see them. I will go to Colonel Wilson. *He* cannot know about it. Hurry!"

Beatrix left the door and bent over the chair. "Aunty, aunty, don't you understand? It is too late for that. Besides they couldn't do anything else. The city is — starving."

The figure in the chair remained tense and upright, listening, yet did not seem to hear. Slowly her arms relaxed. Beatrix had not the courage to look into her face. A single tear dropped on the trembling, thin fingers. But after that no more, and when Miss Celia spoke her voice was steady but very low and tired. "It will be better if you leave me alone now, dearie. By and by — I want to be ready when — they come."

At that same time, so close to the yellow mounds which topped the nearest ridges and to the burrows in the ravines on the other side that the thousands of sweating, dirt-stained faces which looked down from them could see it all, two men sat under a big oak-tree facing each other. One in gray coat, tall, with swarthy face, nervously stripped a twig while he talked. The other, shorter, plain of face, and with coat collar hunched up under his slouch-hat, chewed on a cigar and listened, and spoke only now and then. At last the taller man jumped up, a little knot of officers at one side came forward. The two men under the tree parted; the tall man rode back into

the city, the shorter man, still tugging at his cigar, mounted his horse and was swallowed by a turn in a ravine. Then, up and down the lines on either side, even to the river where Porter's gunboats still sent shell screaming into the sky, and back into the city, into every house and cave went the word *Surrender!* Vicksburg had yielded her defence.

Sunday morning came, and Beatrix from the doorway saw the head of the first long, thin line of men in butternut and gray wind along the road with worn faces and dragging feet, bearing the colours to where, beyond the hills, the massed ranks of blue awaited them. It was in her heart to cheer them, but something stifled the cry in her throat, and she turned and fled. Fled up the stairs, past the door where she knew David watched, past Lee, stepping softly with finger on her lips and the news that Miss Celia, after that long night of pacing of the floor, was asleep at last. And so to her own room. Yet even there through an open window she seemed to hear the monotonous tread of thousands of feet, shuffling wearily through the dust, and she ran to shut this out. But from the window one glimpse she got above the tops of the magnolias — the tower of the Court-House on the hill, its dome shining in the quivering heat, and, above this, its folds lazily unfolding in the light air, the flag which for so long had been outside the city. She tore down the blinds. Then, with fingers in her ears,

threw herself upon the bed, burying her face in the pillows.

So she closed out the sounds which were dreadful to her and all other sounds as well, and lay still, trying not to think; and before her closed eyes the hot, dusty road and its marching men. Old Cæsar must have been at her door for a long time when at last his muffled, anxious voice reached her. She raised her head and bade him go back and say she would not come down. No, it made no difference how urgent her caller might be. But, strangely enough, Cæsar did not go away. This caller, he declared, was not to be denied. He had been told she was in the house. "'Deed, Mis' Be'trix, dere arn't nuffin else t' do but done come down." He had said he *must* see her. *Must!* Why, he had even refused his name! Suddenly, she sat upright, and then with angry eyes stood in front of her glass, tucking in a loose lock of hair and promising the insistent visitor a reception he would not forget.

Down-stairs she went into the darkened hall, her gown caught in one hand, her head back, and anger flaming in her cheeks. So into the hallway, and it was empty; and she stepped to the parlour, and at first saw no one there. Then, by one of the windows, she perceived a tall figure in uniform — the hated Yankee uniforms — and halted. "You wished to see me, sir?"

The figure moved toward her and into the light

from the hallway. She saw his face, the heavy hair flung back from his forehead. Under the dark brows his eyes kindled. There was a smile on his lips. "Beatrix!" he said.

She did not answer at once. The rebuke she had prepared was forgotten. Yet was it surprise which fixed her there at the doorway, leaning a little forward, with hot cheeks, her lips parted, the anger melting in her eyes. Her heart caught at her own name, and repeated it. And then —? She heard him say, "Come," and it seemed to her as if she had waited for this always.

And after that moment's pause, she obeyed. Yes, obeyed. She was so close to him that he had dropped his hat, and his arms were held out to her, before she saw what she had done. A flash of rebellion leaped into her face then. "I will not!" she cried, and threw back her head.

His arms still held out to her, he repeated, "Beatrix!"

She held her head yet higher, fighting down the impulse to answer to the call, and declared, "You have no right here."

"Vicksburg has surrendered!" he said, gravely. And when this should have been a taunt and stung her to retaliation or driven her to a cold retreat, it left her curiously weak, and she blundered, "Then go to Vicksburg. Go!"

"All I care for is here," he answered. "And

"I will not!" she cried, and threw back her head

once I had a letter. Do you remember, Beatrix? I was to come for what I wanted. Now I have come for what belongs to me."

"Oh, oh, wait!" she cried.

It was pitifully weak, that plea, and it won no mercy. "No. *Now.*" This time it was a command; and, suddenly, all her courage failed her, and at its bidding she took one step toward him. Then was the chance of retreat gone by, and she knew it. Knew it when it was too late. She raised her eyes and looked up into his face. Rebellion was fled from her eyes. Worse than that, they cried aloud their rejoicing over this inglorious surrender, and she was not ashamed that he should see it.

An hour went by — so fast. Then a step outside, and she slipped from him guiltily and moved swiftly to the door. At the coat-skirts of a marching regiment, into the road around the shoulder of the ridge ahead, swung three men. And the man between the other two was the Captain; his hands resting on the pommel of his saddle, his shoulders a little stooped, his face set beneath a dusty brim of felt, but his eyes noting even the little pickaninny who darted from a hollow in the bank to whirl a battered hat and screech a welcome.

A moment Boone stood beside her and pressed her hand. Then he ran to his horse and lifted himself into the saddle. Behind the three riders, Beatrix saw him disappear in the cloud of dust which rose

where the Jackson road was beaten to a powder by thousands of feet.

A stone house stood just above the sunken lane where Lee had so often walked. In front of this the Captain dismounted. On the porch of the house were seated the Confederate commander of the city and his staff. Every chair was filled. The plain man in the blue uniform stood by the stoop, pulling a blade of grass between his fingers, and waiting. When no one offered him a seat, he smiled, and asked for a glass of water. Some one indicated the cistern back of the house, and he walked away. Boone swore wrathfully.

"Take it easy," the Captain said. "We can stand it if they can."

Was it a prophecy? How did the conquerors of the city take their triumph? Let the recollections of those who lived about the Walnut Hills bear witness. Let them tell what they remember of the Captain and the gallant McPherson and the others beside who held the city in those days. Some perhaps will recall the day when the Captain rode out of the city for the last time.

Toiling up the slope of that highest ridge, from which he had for so long looked upon the city, he drew rein upon its top. Was it given him as he sat there, his head fallen a little forward and to one side, to see the smoky distance of those Tennes-

see mountains and the trodden fields of Virginia where he was to finish the task to which he had set his hand away back in a little Illinois town? Did some recollection of those earlier days picture for him the gaunt, homely figure of a man in black who had believed in him in the darkest hour, and, in the hour of victory, wrote him, "You were right and I was wrong?" If so, these pictures brought no smile of triumph to his lips. With grave face for a little while he gazed over the wide plain and the great muddy river rolling its ceaseless tide from the north; then he lifted the reins and spoke to his horse.

"Come, Jeff, there is plenty ahead of us to do."

THE END.

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